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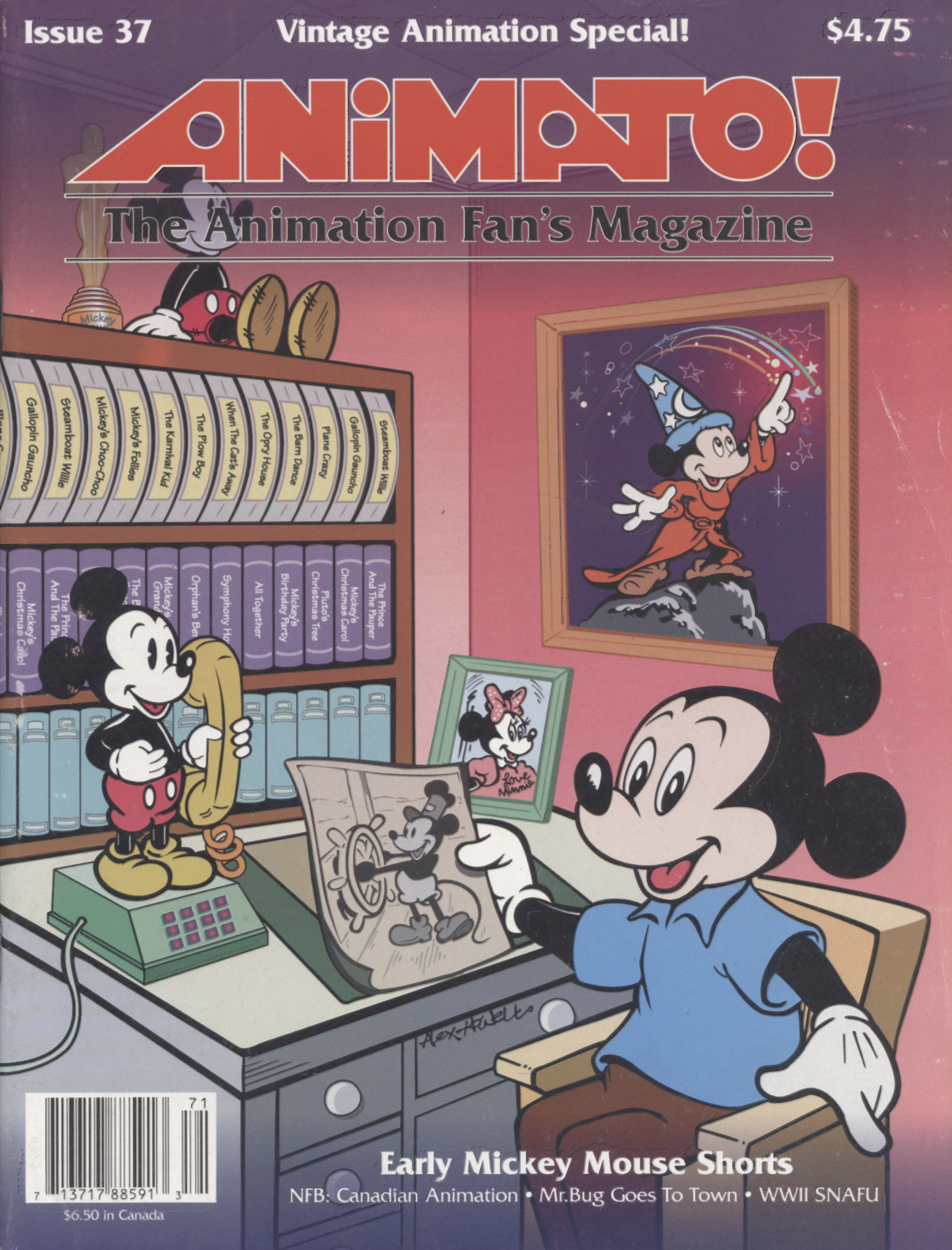
ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine



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ANiMATO!

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Cartoon on page 65 by John Occhiuto

Page 20 © NFB

Spring 1997 Issue 37
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ISSN: 1042-539X
Publisher/Layouts: Patrick Duquette
Editor: G. Michael Dobbs
Typesetting: Sheila Boilard
Front Cover Color and Type produced by Ray Dorow II
Founders: Michael Ventrella and Scott Gillespie
Our Hat's Off to Harry McCracken
Printed by those animated folks at Turley Publishing, Palmer, MA

Special thanks to The public relations folks at The Cartoon Network, Hyperion Publishing, Central Park Media, AnimEigo, Manga Entertainment, Stephen R. Bissette and Pam & Bob Martin of CEL-EBRATION.

About the Cover...

Cover artist Alex Howell was the last artist to write and draw the Mickey Mouse comic strip initiated by Floyd Gottfredson in the 1930's. Alex's pen and ink original drawing appears on page 26 in glorious black and white. Alex is currently in his sixth year drawing a King Features syndicated strip, *Butch and Dougie*.

Ray Dorow II of Illust*RAY*tor did his usual excellent job of preparing and coloring the cover on his Macintosh.

With the exception of Jack Warner, everyone on the planet knows that Mickey Mouse is the property of the Walt Disney Company.

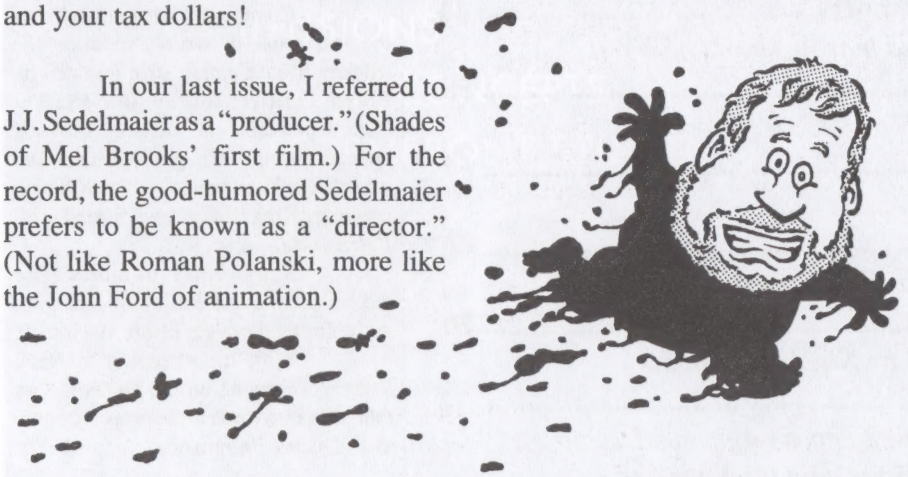
Front Cover Art: Mickey Mouse © Walt Disney Company

PUBLISHER TORIAL

This issue celebrates the return of the *Maiden of Mayhem,* the *Duchess of Doom*, the original *Queen of Mean*: Thelma Scumm! Ms. Scumm last appeared in ANiMATO! #23 and now returns to share her barbed opinions with new friends and old adversaries. You can find the *Venomous Venus* perched in her accustomed position on our last page. Even before she unpacked her bags, Thelma asked me how ANiMATO! could have a Young Readers' Page and at the same time promote the notion that animation wasn't "just for kiddies." Wasn't I, in fact, helping the perception that animation was for children? Fair question. The Young Readers' Page exists to offer a creative platform with relatively easy access for young animation fans. Sending a drawing or essay to ANiMATO! might be the first step in someone's career in animation. Hey, we might be the only program in America spotlighting young people that doesn't involve lawyers, politicians, and your tax dollars!

This issue marks a transition point in the history of ANiMATO! magazine. Layout guy, Gene Gumbs left ANiMATO! as issue #36 went to press. Gene was responsible for layouts all the way back to issue #24. His dedication and expertise will be missed.

In our last issue, I referred to J.J. Sedelmaier as a "producer." (Shades of Mel Brooks' first film.) For the record, the good-humored Sedelmaier prefers to be known as a "director." (Not like Roman Polanski, more like the John Ford of animation.)



Issue #37 also marks the departure of editor Mike Dobbs, who leaves to pursue his own star. Michael had been involved with ANiMATO! since the early digest days as a contributor, then as editor and co-owner. My best wishes and good luck to Mike in his new venture.

A new regular column entitled **Women In Animation,** edited by Jessie Nagel, will give exposure to women's point of view. (**WIA** debuts in issue #38.) I have been looking forward to publishing this column for years. In a perfect world, we should be able to refer to people as "animator," or "director" without a qualifying label like "woman animator" or "black director." Lets face it, women don't get the same regular media coverage as their male counterparts unless they do something outrageous. Perhaps we can enlighten and entertain our readers with Jessie's new column.

Eric Costello will be starting a column on animation history. We don't have a catchy title for Eric, but we expect to have his header done for in time for the next issue.

I don't know what the future will be like in the magazine business, but you can be sure we will do our best to continue the established tradition at the oldest English language animation magazine in the world.

-Patrick

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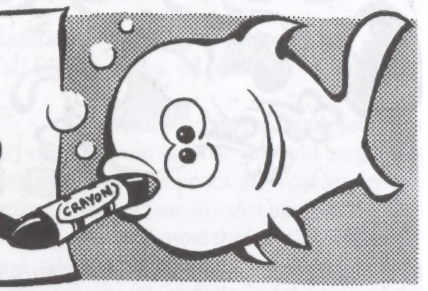


BRING THELMA SCUMM BACK!

Stanley Levon McMullen, President
Galaxies International Incorporated

Dear ANiMATO!,

I am fifty-five years old. A service connected Vietnam vet, *black* and proud of my country. I have subscribed to ANiMATO! since issue number one and I save every issue you've published. The best animated cartoon or motion picture I've ever seen was *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs.* I have been waiting for years for ANiMATO! to do an in-depth article on *Coal Black.* I don't know why the Cartoon Network won't show it. (Thinking it will be sensitive to blacks?) Every black in the United States should see it. Bob Clampett was a genius, and whoever wrote the script should get a special Oscar! I wrote to Bob Clampett's wife Sody, and son Bob Clampett Jr. in Hollywood to find out who the voices were.

You made a mistake (in ANiMATO! #34?) when you stated that Dave Weber was the voice of Queenie in *Coal Black.* You're wrong! Ruby Dandridge (Actress Dorothy Dandridge's mother) was Queenie's voice! She played the cook in the old Gene Autry series and Oriole the neighbor on TV's *Beulah,* starring Hattie MacDaniel and Vivian Dandridge. (Ruby's daughter and Dorothy's sister.) Zoots Watson, a black bandleader, voiced Prince Chawmin'. Mel Blanc, the best animated voice of all time, was the voice of Dopey. - who said; "It's a military secret" at the end. I got all this from Clampett Productions.

My favorite voices of all time are James Baskett (Uncle Remus) with (Brer Fox) in the Laughing Place sequence. Brer Fox, Johnny Lee (lawyer Algonquin J. Calhoun on *Amos 'n' Andy* TV series.) Brer Rabbit, Nicodemus Stewart (Lightnin' the janitor on *Amos 'n' Andy),* and the voice of Brer Bear, Ernestine Wade (Sapphire on *Amos 'n' Andy)* radio and television series, and the second Butterfly. All in Disney's *Song of the South.* Lucille LaVerne, the voice of the Queen/Witch in Disney's *Snow White.* Eleanor Audley, the wicked stepmother in Disney's *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty.* Cliff Edwards and the Hal Johnson Choir, Jim Crow and the Crows in *Dumbo.* Lucille Bliss, Dressilla, Smurfette and Mammy Two-Shoes the black maid in the old MGM *Tom and Jerry* and the third butterfly in *Song of the South.*

(Stanley, You're wishes are our command. Thelma is back with us this issue and we are indeed doing an in-depth look at ***Coal Black*** *for a future issue. --Patrick)*

FreeStateWolfrider
Kelly Hill
Haleyville, AL 35565

Re: Ainsley's Seago's animated (and heated!) "discussion" of the proper way to pronounce "ANiMATO!" I believe the correct way to say "ANiMATO!" is.... ANNA-MAH-TOE...of course that's just this Woof's opinion. That and 50¢ will get you half dollar.

Roy Veldboom (my *ElfQuest* "pusher") sent me an extra copy of #35 which he didn't need. It's the first issue of ANiMATO! I've ever read and I want to compliment you on publishing a Simply Delightful Magazine!! I may even end up subscribing (where will the buck$ come from? *sigh*)...
Enjoyed it immensely!

FreeStateWolfrider
(someone who also loved *Balto*!)

The Delayed Answer Is:

I had occasion to chat with a dedicated voice actor fan at the Warner Brothers store in Boston. This fellow travelled all the way from the Buffalo (NY) area to meet Rob Paulsen and Maurice LaMarche. He asked me one question about the cover of ANiMATO! #32, which I didn't answer adequately. So to answer your question: ***Dot Warner is juggling "running" chainsaws!*** *Just one more thing kids shouldn't try at home. --Patrick*

by John Beam, Stephen R. Bissette, G. Michael Dobbs, and Andrew Osmond

Theatrical Releases

Beavis and Butt-Head Do America
Paramount Pictures

For better or worse, the second feature film which bears of the MTV logo is a no-frills feature-length adaptation of a typical *Beavis and Butthead* TV adventure. Don't expect the risk that was displayed in the superior *Joe's Apartment*. While the film delivers the goods B&B fans will expect, Mike Judge and company missed an opportunity to do something more with the two little buttmonkeys.

The plot revolves around B&B being mistaken by a drunken arms smuggler as two hitman he's hired sight unseen to kill his wife. B&B are sent clueless to Las Vegas to "do" the woman (naturally they think that "doing" this guy's wife is something quite a bit different than their employer).

She sews a stolen virus weapon into the lining of Beavis' shorts and instructs them to meet her in Washington where she'll fulfill their dreams. She arranges for them to travel on a tour bus full of senior citizen, a plot device which gives the boys plenty of opportunity for patented B&B shtick. While many of the usual supporting characters make cameo appearances, the stand-out support is supplied by the unstoppable AFT agent pursuing the boys who subjects anyone remotely suspicious with full cavity searches. Voiced by Robert Stack, a lot of laughs are generated by this character.

The animation is much better than a typical B&B television episode, but generally the film makers have played it safe. The feature has the same flat look of the television shows, and thank all that's holy that no one wanted to draw the buttmunches in 3-D a la *Space Jam*. A three-dimensional Beavis and Butthead would be pretty scary!

This was an opportunity, though, to do something more interesting both visually and dramatically with B&B, and only one sequence showed the potential of a B &B feature. Beavis chews on some peyote when the pair was wandering in the desert, and the resulting hallucination, done in the style of underground cartoonist The Pizz is, is a corker. Nothing else in the feature matches that sequence for imagination.

Is this feature funny? If you like Beavis and Butthead, you'll enjoy this picture. If you're looking for something more than what you'd find on TV, you won't find it here. **GMD**

© 1996 Warner Bros.

Mars Attacks!
Warner Brothers

Only Tim Burton would have the creative clout to make a movie out of a series of bad bubble gum cards. *Mars Attacks* is a hoot, although its appeal is limited to those who don't mind a sick joke, and are aware this the whole film *is* a joke. Too many reviewers thought this film was supposed to be a "straight" science fiction film such as the overly praised *Independence Day*. They difference is that Burton is paying homage to the very films *Independence Day* ripped off!

For animation fans, Burton's film represents another leap forward for computer animation. While the dinos in *Jurassic Park* were technically marvelous, they were not overly endowed with personality. Only *Toy Story* has presented more intriguing CGI characters than the bad boy E.Ts of *Mars Attacks*. The animators had to convey a number of emotions simply through a limited palette of facial expressions, since the Martians' skull-like faces were rather stiff. Characterization through dialogue was limited as the Martian language consisted only of the sound "Ack." The results though were both frightening and very funny.

If you avoided this film in the theaters due to the poor reviews, make sure you see it on video. **GMD**

Princess and the Cobbler
Majestic Films, 93 minutes

As those who read Mike Dobbs' comprehensive feature last summer will know, *Princess and the Cobbler* is a lost cut of a lost film, and thus doubly curious. It is, in fact, Fred Calvert's take on Richard Williams' legendary folly *The Thief and the Cobbler,* combining roughly half his finished footage with new filler material (largely produced by Williams' own animators). Calvert was comissioned to finish the film by the aptly-named Completion Bond Co. By the time he was done, Completion was bust and *Thief/Princess* was acquired by the Disney subsidiary Miramax. Miramax re-cut and re-dubbed Calvert's film, releasing it in America as *Arabian Knight,* where it vanished into theatrical oblivion. At the time of writing there are no plans to release either version (or any other, for that matter) on video. With me so far?

The problem with reviewing *Princess and the Cobbler* (the only version I've seen) is that it's like reflecting on a second-hand cut of *Blade Runner* or *Brazil.* You can't help but wonder how it compares to the unseen original. The fact the original was unfinished only adds to the enigma. This is after all *Thief and the Cobbler* we're talking about, the longest-waited cartoon in history, three decades in the making and rumoured to be the greatest animation ever. I learned of its history only a few years back, yet I still felt sucked into the fan-induced hype.

Having seen the *Princess* version that grip has slackened. I can now state confidently (if subjectively) that:

A - *Princess and the Cobbler* is definitely <u>not</u> the greatest cartoon in history. No surprises there, perhaps, but it's good to check. I can also say fairly surely that:

B - *Thief and the Cobbler,* had Williams finished it, would almost definitely <u>not</u> have been the greatest cartoon in history (though some might argue otherwise). Before the fatwas flood in, however, I should add:

C - *Princess and the Cobbler,* for all its gaucheries and banality, has some of the most astonishing scenes and visions of any toon to date. It's not an artistic milestone, but it's undoubtedly a historic one. So there.

As you may gather, I find *Princess* hard to evaluate. I saw it twice in a day just to try to get a grip on it. Even without the Miramax packaging, it's hard to shake the anachronistic feeling that it's an *Aladdin*-wannabe. Largely this is due to the shared *Thief of Bagdad* ancestry: the same domed citadel, the same cuddly Emperor, the same angular Vizier whose Smurf complexion makes him a sharp-edged relative of Genie. Nor does the title princess (unhappily named 'Yum-Yum') help. Her forced feistiness may be Calvert's invention but her cuteness knocks-off Disney cliche rather than subverting it. In all, *Princess* has what anime fans call *Totoro* import syndrome: superficially comparable to the work of a familiar studio, it's tempting to judge it as a failed imitation.

But then there's the decor. The horrendously intricate patterned backdrops. The ever-changing colour compositions, brash without ever sliding into garishness. At first I thought *Princess'* actual animation was distressingly simple until the fireworks start and characters and perspectives zoom round the screen in a way which has nothing to do with the precision mechanics of *Toy Story* or *Reboot.* It's hard for a non-Art graduate to describe: suffice to say the film tilts a nominal Disney environment into a sublime mix of Escher and Tex Avery.

Many of *Princess'* tricks are familiar: you've just never seen them so magnified. A scene where the Thief falls through washing-lines and bounces through buildings might sound old-hat, but its speed, timing (not to mention the sheer number and invention of gags) makes it an instant archetype. Equally, many toons play with imaginary space but *Princess* uses this to systematically undermine the viewer. Citadels become impossibly bigger inside than out. Characters chase each other through abstract mosaics and rollercoaster through mathematical figures. Extreme close-ups segue into expanding panoramas. And so on.

Before I give the impression that *Princess* is Art as eye-candy, like many quality toons it's the 'mundane' FX which may be its greatest achievements. It's like the not-so-famous multiplane bit in *Pinnochio:* you know, the scene where Pinoc's stuck in the birdcage inside Stromboli's caravan. I'd have no idea of that scene's complexity if I hadn't read how it was done; similarly, I would have missed Zigzag's ubiquitous thirty rings or the cobbler's patchwork outfit if I hadn't consciously looked for them. Earlier I contrasted *Princess' i*mmersive craftmanship with the clockwork exactitude of *Reboot.* People may prefer either, but *Princess'* significance is that it showcases a real genre alternative, grounded in *Yellow Submarine* and theatrical shorts rather than footnoting Industrial Light and Magic. The fact that *Princess* may be a dead-end-after all, how long before anyone dares emulate Williams? - again only adds to the mystique.

By now readers may feel I've purposely skimmed important questions. What about the story? The characters? In both cases there isn't much to say. Both are functional, pegs to hang the film without any real content of their own. Calvert's version at least imports a princess-cobbler romance to fill the gaps: Williams, on the other hand, has as much interest in characters as Tim Burton. The princess is beautiful: the cobbler is brave: the Vizier is wicked: the invaders are brutish: the witch is (er...) strange; and that's it. Not that the characters aren't fun. Their gestures and quirks are lovingly detailed, and the voice cast (including a beyond-the-grave combo of Vincent Price, Donald Pleasance and Kenneth Williams) is often wonderful. But strong narrative it ain't.

Against that, *Princess* has two big pulls. One, already touched on, is the exhuberance of its innumerable set-pieces. Even *Aladdin* (and that's the last time I'll use that comparison, promise!) doesn't have the same sense of glorying in the animation medium, as physics, perspective, shape and form all bend to the draughtsman's will. The second is that *Princess* is, simply, a very funny film. True, it relies entirely on sight-gags but when they're sustained this well, who cares? 90% of them are carried by the Keatonesque thief, who uses the freedom of a cartoon world to take silent heroism to a Zen art. Whether skulking in Williams' interactive patterns, being tossed by ponies or irate nannies, or climbing endless miles of vertical sewer-pipe, the Thief is the embodiment of all that was great about Wile E. Coyote: a cipher fall-guy who never, <u>never</u> gives up. (Actually, forget the coyote: try Arnie's Terminator.)

The last point only hits you as you watch the end credits. As you may remember from Mike's piece, these consist of out-takes from unused Williams footage: alternate angles, possible fillers, a dozen different routes through each seemingly self-contained set-piece. At times, it reminds you of Don Bluth's *Space Ace* or *Dragon's Lair:* this is less a cartoon than a series of interleavened part-drafts, polished to full animation. For Calvern to assemble so much of this haywire footage into a linear film is more than editing: it's a creative act in itself. Respect is due. Forget anything? Oh yeah, the songs are listenable pap (apart from the barbarian routine, which is rather good fun). On the other hand, the baddies' Rube Goldberging, multi-functioning, self-immolating War Machine is one of the best sustained set-pieces in animation history. Think of Spielberg taken to infinity and beyond. See it and gibber.

--Andrew Osmond

On Video

Aladdin and the King of Thieves
Walt Disney Video 68 minutes

Is Disney's biggest (and probably last) spinoff from its five-year old megahit a success? It rather depends on what you're expecting. I was personally disappointed by *Return of Jafar,* little more than a pilot for the TV show. *Aladdin: The Series* itself was part of the quality tailspin which followed the toon of the same name. Thankfully *King of Thieves* dispenses with the irritating TV baggage, substituting an assured and economical story that recalls the original.

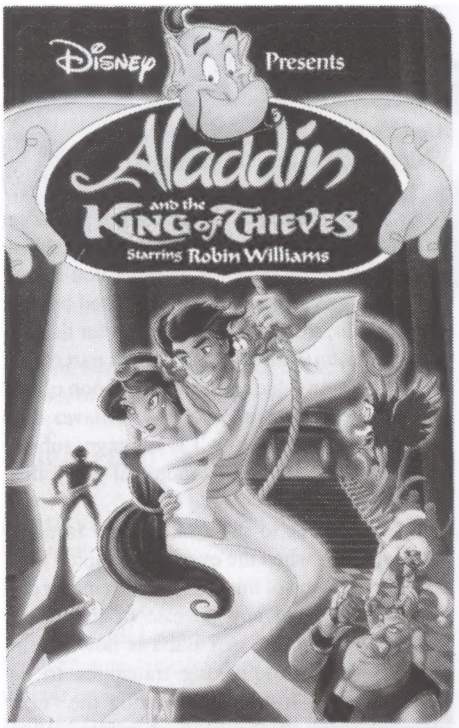
Suffice to say Aladdin and Jasmine are being wed when the event is disrupted by a forty-strong gang of thieves. (Is it just me, or did this scene remind anyone else of the *Fuma Conspiracy* anime?). Ali Baba is nowhere in sight, but the band's king transpires to be Aladdin's long-lost father, hunting the "ultimate treasure" of the hand of Midas. What follows is a reversal of the movie, as Aladdin tries to save his dad from the street-rat world he escaped himself.

Most of the twists are well-signposted and there's a moral let-out even worse than the one in the film. That said, the pacing is good, the dialogue's fine and the father's fate is at least a slight surprise. Despite the wedding this is a boys' adventure, with Jasmine quickly sidelined by all the gags and derring-do. On a Saturday-morning level, however, it works well.

The main selling-point is Robin Williams' return as Genie, replacing Dan (Homer) Castellaneta from the TV version. It'd be mean to criticise Dan's performance - I suspect his main problem was the restriction of the 20-minute action cartoon, with meant much of his humour came over forced and redundant. However, Williams' return is certainly refreshing, his routines combining great gags, sharp self-parody and some quite eyebrow-raising innuendo. The star cameos are back with a vengeance, with Williams impersonating Hanks, Brando, Steamboat Willie and even Robin Williams (!).

On the debit side, some of the routines do detract from the story, and I can't help gripe at Williams' endless pop-culture references - wasn't this a Muslim story once, fellas? Doing a Hollywood father-son reconciliation about the virtues of quality time (tell <u>that</u> to your average lower-income earner) is one thing. Having Genie fill Arabia with switchbacks and baseball courts is quite another. And, more generally, isn't it time there was a Disney <u>mother</u> on the scene again?

The other features are as you'd expect. The songs vary from functional to apalling, while the animation is roughly par with the



Duck Tales movie. The only stand-out is, predictably, the climax, an Atlantean take on *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.* As someone who likes the characters and the genre, I thoroughly enjoyed this well-made if conventional sub-pic. However, those who think video spinoffs only leech true feature animation may well judge otherwise. ***--Andrew Osmond***

Superman, The Last Son of Krypton
Warner Home Video

The team responsible for the groundbreaking *Batman: The Animated Series* has taken on Superman and created a solid, if not necessarily as exciting, animated series. Just as with *Batman*, Bruce Timm, Paul Dini and company have carefully taken key elements from Superman's various comic book and movie versions to create a group of characters and storylines which seem fresh for the Nineties.

While the comic book boys at DC keep coming up with gimmicks to make kids buy Superman comics (the latest being the ludicrous attempt at re-designing the Supersuit), the animated series has restored the character to its basic appeal...a strange visitor from another planet with powers far beyond those of mortal men.

The key here is that the animated series producers have clearly made their hero someone with fantastic powers, but not one who is god-like invulnerable. If Timm and Dini had turned to the Fleischer Superman cartoon for stylistic inspiration for Batman, they have also turned to that series once again, this time for character development. This new animated Superman gets beat up, sweats, grunts, and obviously feels those bullets even they don't kill him, just like his 1940s counterpart. This is a Superman Jerry Seigal and Joe Shuster would have recognized.

At the same time, though, the new animated Superman has some of the funky 1950s plot points (like Krypton's Phantom Zone) which, when dosed out in moderation, are fun and inventive.

This sell-through tape is the first several episodes of the new series which can be seen on the WB network, and cutting them together is a savvy marketing move as it gives Warners an instant animated feature. *The Last Son of Krypton* gives the viewer an effective retelling of Superman's origin, and has the clever idea of making Clark's power as part of his entering puberty.

Once the story shifts to Metropolis and the Daily Planet, one can definitely feel the influence of both the George Reeves series and the first Christopher Reeve movie. Unlike the movie Clark Kent, this guy isn't a klutz, he's much more like George Reeves' understated, somewhat sardonic, reporter. The animated Lois is not like Noel Neil's TV portrayal, and his closer to Margot Kidder. She's smart, attractive, and slightly mean-spirited. Thanks to the great animation gods in the sky that the current live-action series *Lois and Clark* (an show so devoid of action and wit that's popularity must be simply healthy helpings of beef and cheese cake) seems to have had little or no influence on this animated production.

The animation is serviceable, and the story is a neat nod to both the mecha craze in anime and the Fleischer's Superman short *The Mechanical Monsters.* The voice casting leans on celebrity rather than effectiveness. Although Dana Delaney is just fine as Lois, Tim Daley just doesn't inspire as Superman. He should listen to how Bud Collier performed the role in the long-running radio shoe and in cartoons.

While I still prefer the stylistic flourishes and the often gritty stories of *Batman: The Animated Series, Superman, The Last Son of Krypton* is no slouch. ***--GMD***

Dinosaur Babes
Take 2 Productions

Some people love Gilbert and Sullivan, some folks love soap operas. Me, I love Luana, Tumak, and Alley Oop. One has to be either obsessed, indulgent, or addled to really enjoy these caveman epics. I plead guilty on all three counts. The fact that a fellow New Englander whose work as a stop-motion animator I admire had a hand in making this one (though his hand was figuratively "chopped off" by opportunistic producers) further crippled my critical faculties.

Though I thoroughly enjoyed *Dinosaur Babes*, I don't want to build any false expectations: by all conventional standards, *Dinosaur Babes* is a dreadful movie. Hell, by its own creator's standards, it's wretched: infuriated by the producers tampering with his original concept, script, and their appropriation of the project after preliminary shooting was completed, writer, director, and animator Brett Piper has disowned the film. He is understandably upset at its unauthorized video release. Nevertheless, Piper's animated dinosaurs are abundant and wonderful, and I found the film's embarrassments as perversely entertaining as its remaining patchwork virtues. As a caveman-movie junkie in need of a fix, I'll take whatever I can get these days: I haven't had this much cheapjack fun since *Dinosaur Island* (1994), which likewise reveled in the antics of scantily-clad cavewomen and absurd genre archetypes, without offering anything close to Piper's plentiful dinosaurs on the prowl amid the pulchritude.

I hasten to add that one should NOT judge Piper's capabilities as a filmmaker based upon *Dinosaur Babes*. Piper has been making his homegrown fantasy features in New Hampshire since 1982's *Mysterious Planet*, writing, photographing, directing, and executing all the special effects on his own. His most recent release, a *Horror of Party Beach* parody/pastiche entitled *They Bite* (1993, released on video by MTI Home Video), was completed for only $140,000 and was his first opus filmed in Florida. Though again compromised by producer interference, *They Bite* is a great deal of fun, enlivened by a genuinely funny script and Piper's ambitious monster designs and effects. Despite its flaws, it is in every way far superior to *Dinosaur Babes*.

By July of 1993, Piper had prepared a stop-motion animation-filled promo real to attract investors to an all-ages feature entitled *The Dinosaur Kid.* In hindsight, Piper's instincts were correct — the only direct-to-video dinosaur feature targeted at families and children as an alternative to *Jurassic Park* was the lame Charles Band production *PreHysteria!* (1993), which was an award-winning moneymaker in the rental and sell-through market. Unable to finance his family feature, Piper pragmatically embraced the 'R' ticket alternative and returned to Florida to film *Dinosaur Babes*, which Piper conceived as a parody of the genre, ala *Caveman*, complete with Chuck Jones and Tex Avery-inspired gags. That was the film he shot, or so he thought. Alas, the producers hindered filming, and then appropriated the footage. Piper withheld final animation effects footage, but the producers used what they had in hand, incorporating incomplete and unpolished effects tests to edit the finished direct-to-video release (quietly issued without Piper's knowledge, and, despite the producers promises, still credited to Piper).

As it stands, *Dinosaur Babes* eschews any coherent parody (the omniscient narrator's

deadpan attempts at humor fall flat more often than not), and instead epitomizes the ilk of insipid fantasy Piper intended to satirize. Even before I'd learned of the film's troubled history, I approached *Babes* knowing its budget wasn't generous and its role models were delinquent. Shorn of its satiric intent, *Dinosaur Babes'* imagery and dramaturgy remains rooted in the *Prehistoric Women* school of fantasy, grounded every caveman epic since D.W. Griffith's *Man's Genesis* (1912), with a dash of shameless 1970s-style drive-in movie exploitation.

The prologue is knowingly evocative of the opener of Val Guest's *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1970), as a tribe cowled with saurian skulls and hides sacrifice one of an imprisoned trio of women to a disfigured T. rex. Though the lack of money, production polish, and acting ability is an immediate and obvious detriment, this precredits sequence demonstrates more affection, wit, and visual imagination than any other recent entry in this impoverished genre. While cavemen Bruno, Zak, and Shifty unsuccessfully scrounge food for their starving tribe, their village is ravaged by invaders who kidnap three women and butcher the rest. The trio of hunters set out on a quest to rescue the women before they are all offered up to the enemy tribe's god, the hideously scarred T. rex of the precredits sequence. What remains of Piper's screenplay plunders Nigel Kneale's 1955 classic *Quatermass and the Pit* (a pack of mutants and a deformed skull offer evidence of extraterrestrials tampering with human evolution), along with sf pulp concepts introducing an alien shipwreck to the prehistoric landscape (which figures in the deus ex machina climax).

There are the usual low-budget lapses, which Piper may have intentionally incorporated: the unconvincing rubber dino limbs interacting with actors during animation sequences and the anachronistic haircuts on a couple of the Dino Babes are practically trademarks of the genre. Other lapses are more unfortunate, casualties of the producers' manhandling of the production after Piper's departure. There are a number of effects glitches uncharacteristic of Piper's usual standards (reflections, evident matte lines, vestigial images, shadows against two-dimensional backgrounds, etc.), which must make his blood boil in their current state. The staged fight sequences are risible throughout (the bane of many low budget direct-to-video independents), however liberal the subsequent gore shots may be; given Piper's competent handling of action sequences in *They Bite* and earlier exercises such as *Shockarama* (1990), it's fair to assume Piper would have made something more of the fight sequences during the editing process, or intentionally played them for laughs. Rewritten, or unfilmed, story elements are left dangling or utterly incoherent (i.e., the cheat of the monstrous skull and skeleton amid the burned village ruins, implying the cowled tribe are inhuman creatures, and the aimless, enigmatic interlude with the stone dinosaurs). The producers' indifference and/or ignorance is blatantly obvious when the word "buried" is misspelled in the coda titles!

The onscreen thespian talent is amateurish but easy on the eyes ("casting by Take 2 Talent Management"). The titular "babes" are consistently attractive, and never miss an opportunity for Dino Babe bondage, nudity, strip tease, cat fights, or writhing in the sand. Ruder assaults on feminist ideologies include a surfside torture involving patently phony phallic sandworms, and the maimed T. rex's habit of licking the nubile sacrificial offerings before putting the offscreen chomp on them.

Dinosaur Babes is a travesty, but the tattered remnants of Piper's original enterprise are still engaging. Piper's saurian supporting cast is a lively menagerie of stop-motion and/or live-action puppet animated creatures, knocking even this maimed version of *Dinosaur Babes* a good notch or two above its competitors. These are among Piper's most ambitious and accomplished animation sequences to date (a shot of a Stegosaurus drinking at a pond, a portrait of a sauropod nibbling from a treetop by a lake, and portions of the Monoclonius sequence are expanded from Piper's *Dinosaur Kid* promo reel). The individuality of the creatures is enhanced by the naturalistic detailing on the models themselves (including scars, mold, etc.), and the animation itself is very well done and often supple. The live-action miniature puppet sequences are much less effective (remember, Piper didn't approve of many of these shots, some of which were intended as test footage), though the disfigured T. rex's moonlit mayhem and demise is memorably atmospheric.

As a fellow artist, I can hardly recommend *Dinosaur Babes* in its current form. I fear I've done Brett a disservice by even discussing the film, but I know that many ANiMATO! readers have already rented the video, or will want to know about it, and felt a need to address its virtues and explain its history. Despite my misplaced affection for it, I heartily empathize with Piper's plight and his utter contempt for the film. One hopes Piper will eventually gravitate to either a sympathetic producer or the necessary funds to mount the kind of film he would truly care to make. The marketplace realities that drove Piper to the exploitation ghetto of *Dinosaur Babes* in lieu of the family market he hoped to reach with The Dinosaur Kid continue to hinder Piper's best efforts.

Indeed, the market seems to breed the contempt and indifference that characterizes this current version of *Dinosaur Babes* — contempt and indifference for both the filmmaker and the target audience.

You deserve better, Brett.

We do, too.

But in the meantime... **--SRB**

A chilling moment from Jan Svankmajer's *Faust*. (© 1996 Kino International Corp.)

Faust(Leucke Faust/The Lesson of Faust)
Kino Video

Czech filmmaker and animator Jan Svankmajer has earned considerable prominence in Europe and the UK of late, where a generation of artists (including the Brothers Quay, Dave McKean, and writer Neil Gaiman) have acknowledged their debt to him. However,
Svankmajer is still relatively unknown in the US. His work has attracted a well-deserved following and, thankfully, some circulation via video release, but it seems fair to say Svankmajer's work will never be "popular" here in the States.

Svankmajer's austerity, dark allegorical poetry, and organic surrealism is an acquired taste, the antithesis of the escapist cinematic diet most Americans crave. If Svankmajer's films seem oppressive to Western sensibilities, it is only because he has weathered more oppressive living and working conditions than any American filmmaker has faced since the blacklist era. In his home country, Svankmajer survived a government-imposed "silencing"
between 1972-79, when he simply was not permitted to make films of any kind. After he could return to work, three of his subsequent short films were shelved and banned by Czech

authorities. Oppression has shaped Svankmajer's vision, has become part and parcel of what his films are.

Svankmajer's first feature film, *Alice* (Neco Z Alenky / Something From Alice, 1987), was financed by British, Swiss, and West German producers, and waited almost five years for its limited US release. In the wake of the relative success of Alice and retrospectives of Svankmajer's short films, he has continued to attract UK and international financing, completing seven shorts and another feature, Faust, in the past decade. Significantly, Faust was funded in part by the Czech Republic. I considered it a good sign when Faust popped up in a handful of alternative theaters only one year after its European debut.

My delight at seeing *Faust* on the big screen was hardly shared by the friends who accompanied me (including **ANiMATO!**'s fearless editor), whose negative reaction to the film will perhaps be shared by many **ANiMATO!** readers viewing Kino Video's welcome release.

Kino's edition is dubbed into English rather than subtitled, but its essential elements still face translation difficulties. Svankmajer's ongoing fascination with and application of folk puppet traditions (dating from his first film, *The Last Trick of Mr. Schwarzwald and Mr. Edgar,* 1964) clearly resonates with European audiences, who share those roots, but its iconography and dramaturgy doesn't engage contemporary American viewers in the same manner. Svankmajer's calculated pacing and fatalistic symmetry is particularly pronounced in *Faust*, and the self-conscious meditations on his source material (including Goethe, Marlowe, Grabbe, and folk puppet versions) bored and infuriated my companions. In short, the method may seem too methodical, the madness (in the relatively spare use of Svankmajer's animation effects) compelling but too deliberately obtuse. When extended over feature-film length, the lack of shared cultural roots or sensibilities becomes a liability for impatient or unwilling participants.

Sympathetic viewers versed in Svankmajer's oeuvre and sources, however, will find *Faust* a rich, haunting, and rewarding effort. Faustus (Petr Cepek) emerges from beneath the street, elevated to the city sidewalk on an escalator to reluctantly accept a handout which appears to be a map. He throws it away as garbage, only to find a similar map waiting in his mail box. The map and a pair of enigmatic men (who are first seen distributing the maps) subsequently guide Faustus through a maze of places and events which force him to participate in a multi-level recreation of the tale of Faust. His every attempt to escape leads him deeper into the performance. Most of these recreations are overtly theatrical in nature: Faustus is compelled to don makeup and costume, only to flee when he finds himself on a stage before a gathering audience; six-foot marionettes interact with him, playing key roles (including Mephistopheles, the sardonic Jester, and an entourage of demons), and he himself at times becomes a puppet. Other recreations are alchemical: escape from the proscenium stage leads to a medieval laboratory, in which a clay fetus in a beaker grows into an infant whose head matures into adult features before withering into a living skull.

All of this is steeped in Svankmajer's significative cinematic universe. Live action, stop-motion clay and object animation, pixilation, marionettes, and theatrical artifice amid desolately naturalistic settings are orchestrated into a cohesive tapestry. In both visual and aural terms, it is a disturbingly tactile weave, as textures, sensations, sounds, and shapes emerge and erupt in unexpected combinations. After booting a black chicken out of his apartment, Faustus uncovers an egg which has been baked into a loaf of bread; when he breaks the egg open, an unnatural wind animates the furniture and disrupts his apartment. After Faustus' first dialogue with Mephistopheles, the clay demon's visage (a simulacrum of Faustus) collapses and the pieces roll their separate ways across a woodland floor, bristling with grass, dirt, teeth, and eyes.

More conventional narrative setpieces are spiced with similar perversities. When Faustus' vacillates over signing the unholy contract, a flurry of tiny angel and devil marionettes emerge from disembodied puppet heads. After repeatedly breaking the quill Faustus is to sign with, the angels are beaten into submission, writhing beneath demons who fornicate with them while pounding their heads to pulp and sawdust; once the pact is signed in blood they noisily flutter back into the wooden heads. Animated sequences are grounded by equally unsettling live action inventions: the two "guides" stare up at Faustus' apartment with opaque white eyes, patting the black chicken they hold between them; stairs rot into splinters beneath his feet as Faustus desperately ascends; a free-standing tabletop spurts wine when it is drilled into; an old derelict carries a severed human leg, worried by a hungry mongrel dog; the oversized Jester puppet (Faustus' servant) runs out into the street to harangue pedestrians, imploring them to protect his master. With or without the animation and effects he is renowned for, Svankmajer's juxtaposition of imagery, editing, and sound creates a hyperreality is readily identifiable as his and his alone, with its own distinctive physics and metaphysics, its own sense of time and place. It is a world as complete in, of, and to itself as those of Sergio Leone's westerns, or, in polar opposition, Tex Avery's cartoons.

Faust is an undeniably mature and compelling creation, but the uninitiated may find Svankmajer's short works and his previous feature *Alice* more accessible and "entertaining" entrees. These are currently available on video, and Praeger recently published an excellent English-language study of Svankmajer's work (**Dark Alchemy: The Films of Jan Svankmajer,** edited by Peter Hames, ISBN #0-275-95299-1). Two video compilations of Svankmajer's short films offer an ideal introduction to his work. Scenes from the *Surreal* (First Run Features) collects three of his most recent shorts, packaged with an excellent BBC documentary *Jan Svankmajer: The Animator of Prague*. An earlier anthology tape, *Jan Svankmajer: Alchemist of the Surreal* (IFEX International Video) proffers a broader selection, from his first films from the mid-1960s through the remarkable *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1982); however, some editions of this tape reportedly supplant the films listed on the box with Svankmajer's later work, and there is no way to know which edition of the tape you are purchasing until you view it!

First Run Features also distributed a crisp print of *Alice* on video here in the US, which I highly recommend. Extrapolated from a more familiar and beloved source (Lewis Carroll's **Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass**), *Alice* was by its very nature a more playful creation, however unsettlingly morbid (and truthful) Svankmajer's observations of the childhood imagination proved to be. Though it is often quite funny, *Faust* is an altogether more somber and fatalistic meditation on mortality itself, drawn from a moralistic parable our Capitalistic culture continues to pay lip service to, but does its damnedest to refute.

"I will make use of your deceptive guile and your satanic anger," Svankmajer's Faustus tells his mirror image Mephistopheles, explicating the method of Svankmajer's imaginative means. The traditional pact with the devil was motivated by the desire for arcane knowledge and earthly riches, but Svankmajer's Faustus ultimately embraces a more elemental and terrifying revelation: living in the modern world, we have all made our pact with the devil from birth, with life itself the only reward.

--Stephen R. Bissette

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アニメ
Anime

M.D. Geist II: Deathforce
U.S. Manga Corps
45 minutes, dubbed
#USM 1508

Why? Why was this horrible piece of tripe made? Apparently, Central Park Media (from whom U.S. Manga Corps is a subsidiary) decided to push one of their first anime releases for a so-called "sequel" to *M.D. Geist*. This was an unfortunate title choice, since I would not rate *M.D. Geist* as anything worth purchasing in the first place. Another unfortunate happening is the fact that several Japanese corporations combined with CPM to put this putrid thing together.

This story (as far as I can ascertain) is about a manufactured killer (M.D. Geist) who cannot get enough of doing little else *but* killing. He was imprisoned briefly in an orbiting capsule, only to be accidentally released, and now he is on the rampage again. At first, it appears that he is on the side of the remnants of humanity against flesh-eating robots; however, he soon joins the killer 'bots in an orgy of blood. Another M.D. (named Krauser), tries to lead what is left of humanity to defeat this threat, but his own power-hungry ambitions and a power-play between his lieutenants and himself contribute to their own inevitable downfall. Geist and this flesh-eating buddies swoop down on everyone, and Krauser is defeated. In a rather confused sequence of events, it *appears* that the attacking forces (along with Geist) are taken up in the destruction they have produced, with only a handful of humanity escaping it.

But... *surprise!* At the very end, there is some suggestion that there will be yet *another* "Geist" sequel. Happy? Folks, after several painful viewings of this, I have come to the conclusion that *M.D. Geist II: Deathforce* is absolutely the *worst* piece of anime I have ever seen. It appears to me that this was supposed to be a full-length motion picture that ran out of budget (and story elements), and was pieced together in an attempt to make something comprehensible out of it. The cutting is choppy, and the flow from one sequence to another is totally confusing. To make matters worse, the English dubbing is nothing less than ridiculous. The animation itself is passable, but whatever true talent presented is completely wasted on trashy content and unruly direction. This terrible video does not deserve any further comment. Case closed! (Alternative Recommendations: *Warriors of the Wind, Gall Force*)

--John Beam

StreetFighter II
Volume 1
Three episodes
Manga Entertainment

***Streetfighter II* (© Manga Entertainment)**

Do you remember the Fleischer Popeye cartoon, *The Fighting Pals*? It was a parody of the Stanley and Livingston story in which Bluto, an African explorer, is believed lost and Popeye endures all sorts of tropical peril in order to find him. When they reunite, they beat each other senseless...all in good fun!

This anime series from Manga Entertainment reminds me of that 50 year-old Popeye cartoon. The sheer joy of fighting is the element which motivates our two young heroes Ken and Ryu to travel around the world looking for a fight.

This 10 volume/29 episode production is the Japanese *Streetfighter* television series. While it shares some of the characters of the *StreetFighter II* movie released by Sony/Manga, this series is actually a *prequel* to that film and other *Streetfighter* productions. If you not familiar with the Streetfighter universe, you might not understand the production's time frame, and wonder why the film makers make such a point to state that Ken and Ryu are 17 and Chun Li is just 15!

In the first volume, the plot is minimal, but there's much hitting, kicking, yelling, and crashing. Ryu gets a plane ticket and money from Ken to come visit him in America. They go to a popular where they pick a fight with a group of toughs and have fun until Sergeant Guile comes in and practically murders them. They learn they need to learn more, so with money from Ken's filthy rich father, they decide to go spanning the globe to look for streetfighters with they can hone their fighting skills. Amazingly, although there's lots of fights, there is very little gore.

The animation is serviceable, with a lot of cost-cutting tricks to stretch the budget. The dubbing is also competent, although the dialogue is awkward in places.

If watching animated characters beat the living daylight out of one another, then check out *StreetFighter II*. ***--GMD***

Vampire Princess Miyu
Volume 2
AnimEigo
55 minutes, subtitled
AT092-005

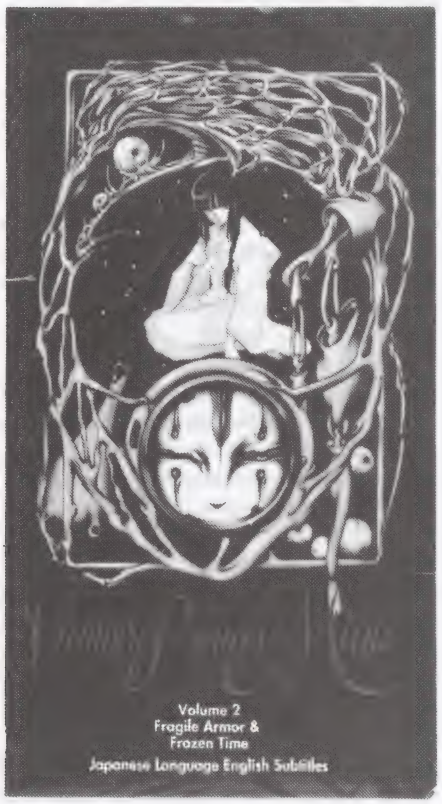
In volume 1 of this series (episodes one and two), Miyu is presented for who she is; a vampire who can grant eternal life for whomever wishes it, and a warrior of sorts who battles Shinma (destructive demons) along with her manservant Larva. In volume 2, we find out WHY Miyu is who she is, and also catch a glimpse of why the spiritualist Himiko continues to pursue her.

In episode three ("Fragile Armor"), Larva is imprisoned by the Shinma, and she must use Himiko to lure the forces of evil so she can secure his release. In the meantime, the Shinma use the resurrected spirit contained within an enormous suit of armor to destroy Miyu. The Shinma (Linemure) actually wishes to release Larva from Miyu's control, and the unfortunate man within the armor wishes to forget why he was resurrected by the Shinma (the circumstances surrounding this are rather painful). Himiko (as always) gets in the middle of everything, and is left with a myriad of questions. "Frozen Time" tells of Miyu's origins, and details the pain she must endure for being who she is. It also explains an experience Himiko had with Miyu as a small girl, and possibly why she is so drawn to her.

I find the gothic atmosphere and pathos of these stories irresistible. After watching the first episodes of *Vampire Princess Miyu*, it is refreshing to see how her life contributes continually to her sorrow, an element missing in volume one. She is at first someone who seems lofty and above all emotional situations going on around her. Here, she is shown as someone who masks her pain, and is actually a fragile child. We also find out who Larva is, and the tragedy surrounding his servitude to Miyu. If I have any complaints about these stories, it is that Himiko at times seems to be simply an element to help string the story along. Most of the time, she is merely someone for Miyu to explain everything that's going on to.

This anime series is based upon a manga (comic) by Narumi Kakinouchi, who also created the character designs, drew storyboards, and supervised animation. Having seen his artwork (currently published by

Antarctic Press), I am very much impressed. The anime is indeed a successful rendition of everything Kakinouchi achieves in his published work, which is due in part to the masterful overall direction by Toshihiro Hirano (of *Iczer-One* fame). This two-volume series is for viewers who want true emotional impact to go along with their horror. All Freddie Kruger and Michael Myers fans watch at your own risk. Highly recommended. ***--John Beam***



Roujin Z
U. S. Manga Corps
80 minutes, subtitled
USM 1323

Finally! A new spin on the old tale of technology running amok. Not only that, but *Roujin Z* is also a new spin on the overused premise of giant robots beating the hell out of each other. However, there is a genuine seriousness to this story, one which will concern almost all of us at some point in our lives.

Haruko is a nurse in training who cares for Kijuro Takazawa, an elderly gentleman who has practically been deserted by his family. Haruko is his only source of love and care, but The Ministry of Public Welfare think they can do a better job. They use poor Takazawa as a guinea pig for their new contraption to eliviate the "problem" of caring for the growing elderly population. This machine (the Z-001) will take care of all difficulties of keeping invalids healthy and supervised, but Haruko is concerned with the only thing a machine cannot give: love.

However, little do the bureaucrats in the MPW know that the computer running the Z-001 is a "bio-computer" which is capable of being programmed to take on human characteristics (something it's designers were not even aware of). With the help of some geriatric computer-hackers, Haruko is able to get in contact with Takazawa through the computer giving him the impression that it is his long-departed wife speaking to him. Takazawa's past memories, along with input from the hackers allow the Z-001 to take on the personality of Haru, his wife.

In Takazawa's intense loneliness, his memories are drawn to a time when he and Haru are happily vacationing at a beach. His desire to visit the beach activates Haru/Z-001, and nothing on God's earth is going to stop "her" from fulfilling his dream. This film is so characteristic of the originality in storytelling with Japanese animated filmmakers. It gives us much-used anime elements, putting it all in nursing home surroundings. Don't knock the concept. Besides, in the current atmosphere we have of how to care for our elderly, *Roujin Z* speaks volumes of how our parents and grandparents seem to be in danger of becoming a disposable segment within our society. It is ironic that the one "person" involved with the government scheme in this story who really cares about Takazawa is the Z-001. That fact is also very sad.

The story and screenplay of *Roujin Z* is by Katsuhiro Otomo, the creator and director of *Akira* (arguably the most sophisticated animated film ever made). This film lacks *Akira*'s advanced technological feats and fluid animation, but it far surpasses *Akira* in continuity, characterizations, story, and sensitivity. There are a few jerky sections with the movement, but for the most part the animation is very good. For the most part, this is a fun film, but it is also thought-provoking. Highly Recommended (*Roujin Z* was also a "Siskle & Ebert Video Pick of the Week"). ***--John Beam***

Tenchi The Movie: Tenchi Muyo in Love
Pioneer Entertainment
95 minutes, subtitled
PIVA-1390S

Before I get into this film, perhaps I should explain a few details about *Tenchi Muyo* ("No Need For Tenchi") for those of you who are uninformed. Tenchi is the descendent of an alien family (the type from an other planet), who's duty is to defeat and incarcerate the forces of evil. He thinks he is a normal kid (who just happens to receive odd martial arts training from his grandfather, Katsuhito), until he accidentally releases Ryoko, a demon who was imprisoned by Kausuhito centuries ago. She tries to kill Tenchi, but after he manages to defeat her, she falls in love with him.

Meanwhile, Ayeka (who just *happens* to be a member of the same alien family as Tenchi) is searching the galaxy for Ryoko, and finds both of them together. After a brief "encounter", Ayeka's spaceship is wrecked, and she and her little sister Sasami are forced to move in with this ever-growing "family." Then there's Mihoshi, who is a "crack" member of the Galaxy Police (actually, the only thing about Mihoshi that is cracked is her brain). She is also on the trail of Ryoko, but she is so incompetent that she wrecks her spaceship too, adding to the menagerie. Include Ryo-ohki, Ryoko's "catbbit" (which transforms into her ship), and Washu, Ryoko's "mother", and you pretty much fill out the cast.

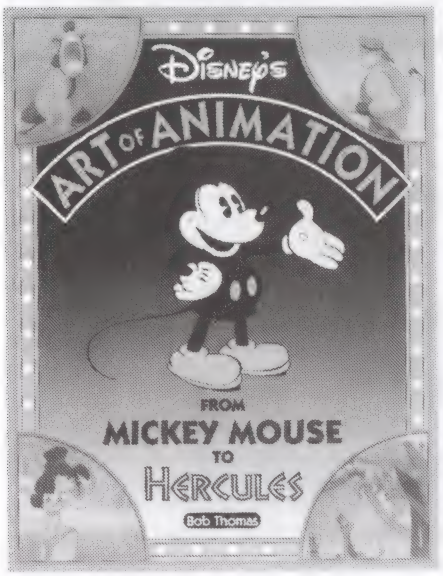
Now, I'll detail the movie. An evil being named Kain (pronounced k-EYE-n) travels to 1970 to make sure that Tenchi's parents never meet. However, Washu (who is the greatest inventor in the universe) is able to keep Tenchi from disappearing temporarily, and sends the Tenchi Muyo cast back to 1970 to stop Kain from taking Tenchi's mother, Achika, to his dimension.

Well, that's about it folks. While I think the video series of *Tenchi Muyo* is rollicking fun, this movie is slow and pretentious. It is so terribly serious, yet I am left wondering what the true significance of the events of the story is, except that Tenchi will disappear if Kain isn't stopped. When the film tries to be humorous, these sequences are flat and contrived. The overall film presentation is very well done, but unless you have a grip on the story prior to this film, you will be totally confused. It isn't a bad movie, but it doesn't hit the target. (Alternative Recommendations: *Urusei Yatsura*, and the *Tenchi Muyo* OVA (direct-to-video) series)
--John Beam

PSST!
WANNA PEEK AT ISSUE #38?
TURN TO PAGE 69

In Print

Disney's Art of Animation:
From Mickey Mouse to Hercules
by Bob Thomas
Hyperion; $45.00



Lavishly illustrated, stylishly designed, and beautifully printed, this thumbnail history of the Disney Studios by long-time newspaper reporter Bob Thomas is undoubtedly going to be on the wish list of every Disney fan. Previously released in 1992, this new edition of the book features an animated cover and a substantial section on the making of the new Disney feature *Hercules*.

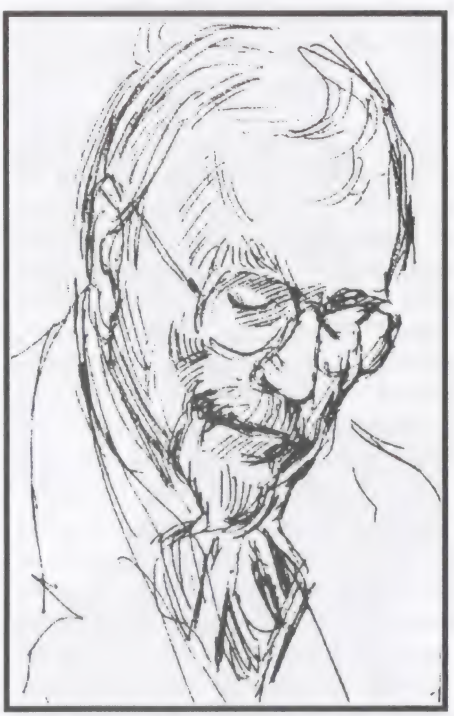
This is by no means a complete history of the studio and its films. Very few short subjects are covered, and many features are mentioned but not examined. This is a primer on Disney animation, and a preview of *Hercules*. As a historian, Thomas gets fair marks for some sections, but his chapter on animation before Disney is an insult to the pioneers who preceded Walt. Thomas asserts there was little or no "character" animation prior to Disney, and that silent animation was nothing more than crudely drawn productions featuring nothing more than a strings of unrelated gags. It's completely unnecessary to gild the Disney lily by denigrating the work of Max Fleischer, Otto Mesmer, and others.

Thomas is a Hollywood insider who, besides his work for wire services, has written a number of star biographies. In many ways this book is just that, with the star being the Disney animation studios. Thomas has the advantage over many contemporary writers of having interviewed Disney a number of times, and many of these quotes are used in this book.

The purpose of this book, though, is not to present a detailed, objective look at Disney and his studio. This is, afterall, an authorized Disney product. Walt Disney, who has been the subject of quite a few "insider" books, gets off rather lightly here. Thomas is willing to allow Disney to be a human being and have a few warts (the break-up with Ub Iwerks and the strike are covered briefly), but the reader is always reminded of his artistic risks and his story-editing prowess

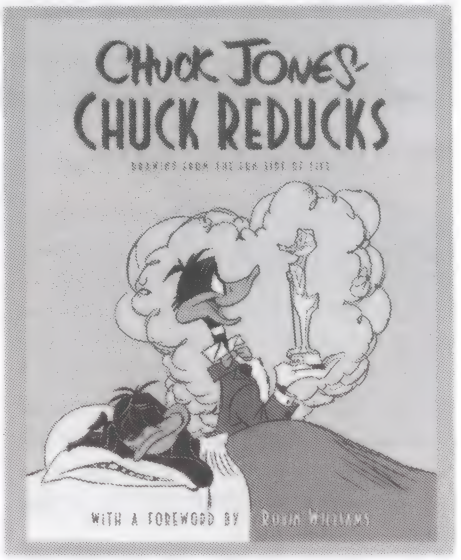
There is surpassingly more candor in the section of the book which deals with the post-Walt era. Thomas recounts the struggles of the studio's animated features of that time (*The Aristocats, Robin Hood, The Fox and the Hound,* and *The Black Cauldron*) and tells how the new group of Disney execs turned the animation division around with films such as *The Great Mouse Detective, Oliver & Company,* and finally *The Little Mermaid*. Thankfully, Thomas gives a fair amount of coverage to the key animators, and directors, not just people such as Michael Eisner, Roy E. Disney, and Peter Schneider. Former wunderkid Jeffrey Katzenberg is mentioned a number of times, but fades out of the narrative before Thomas gets around to discussing *Beauty and the Beast*.

My favorite part of the book is the section of *Hercules* as Thomas concentrates on revealing the creative process behind a Disney animated feature. Each aspect of the production is covered with informative test and fantastic illustrations. While I can't say this section alone is worth the $45.00 price tag, I can say it is a real gem. **--GMD**



A sketch by Richard Williams of Mr. Jones from *Chuck Reducks*

Chuck Reducks:
Drawing from the Fun Side of Life
by Chuck Jones
Warner Books; $26.95



Chuck Jones continues the highly personal look at his life in animation in this volume that he started in his 1989 book *Chuck Amuck*. Reading this book is like getting an invitation to have dinner with Jones at his home. He might start a discussion about how a particular cartoon was made, but the anecdote will change into a reminisce of his childhood and his Uncle Lynn, and then change direction again into his philosophy on directing animation. Jones unabashedly loves his kids, grandchildren and great grandchildren and pays special attention to his second wife Marian.

Would I be an ungrateful dinner guest, if I wanted to hear more about his career and the people with whom he worked and less about his Uncle Lynn? Is it heresy this editor to admit that some parts of this book..well..*wanders* around a bit too much? Of course, would anyone care if I did?

If a straight-ahead narrative is what you crave, you're not going to get it here. This is sitting on a front porch with a big glass of something cold listening to Jones talk about his life. He's got some great scrapbooks in front of him with photos, model sheets and sketches from various points in his career. On some matters, he talk a lot, while on others a mere mention is sufficient. His family and friends are never far from his thoughts.

As animation fans we have the good fortune that one of the definite ge-

(Continued on Page 62)

Marvin the Martian's New Flick

The people in the know have been deploring it for years. 57th Street in midtown Manhatten, which had been one of the art centers of the world has now turned into a (shudder!) theme park. It began when the Hard Rock Cafe opened around ten years ago. The came Planet Hollywood a few years later, and soon between Fifth and Eighth avenues was restaurant row, full of overpriced eateries and the wrong kind of tourists.

Added to this was the Warner Brothers Studio store. For about four years they sold cels , licensed chactkes, videos, all on three floors. The people at Warners marketing were especially proud of what was their flagship store. Until last year Disney had safely been kept out of the Big Apple, but that's a different story. But even before The Mouse had threatened to make his appearance here, The Wabbit had decided to renovate his boutique and turn it into something bigger.

A vertical theme park. Well, not really...

On the seventh floor is a theater, which plays a 3-D animated extravaganza called *Marvin the Martian in the Third Dimension*. This is the first new Warners toon I've seen since *Box Office Bunny* back in...geez I forgot! Anyway, at two bucks a viewing I thought it was worth it. At two bucks, it was.

Marvin's latest extravaganza is very much like other Ninties toons. Great animation, great special effects, lousy script.

Basically, it's the standard Bugs/Daffy vs. Marvin in reverse. Daffy, itseems is planning to blow up Mars. Alas, he's only doing it in a cheap sci-fi flick, but Marvin, observing on his alluvium-Q adhesive space telescope, doesn't know that. So he sends his trusty assistant Kay-nine (they seem to have forgotten his name is Montague) to earth on the Maggot, which takes off like George Reeves used to do on the old *Superman* show. UFOs with feet is genuinely funny idea and is wonderful to behold, as are the space battles that follow. We also see the fabled Alluvium-Q Space Modulator at work, which actually manages to set Daffy's tail on fire!

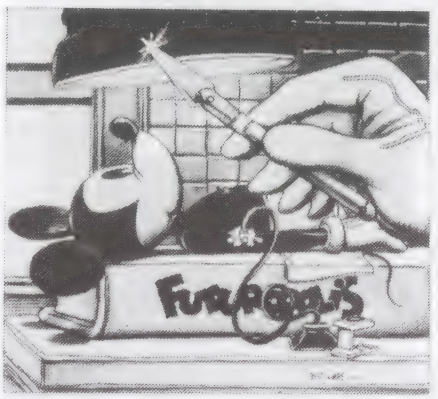
The rest is mainly forgettable, which is sad because the artwork and computer graphics are spectacular. If only the writing was as good.

The people at Warner's don't seem to have the faintest idea about who Marvin really is and what he's good for. While Elmer Fudd can and does play the hero now and then, Yosemite Sam *never* does. Neither should Marvin.If your going to see a toon at a theme park, see Don Bluth's Hanna-Barbera ride at the MGM studios inOrlando.Now *that's* fun!

--Eric Lurio

Louise Beaudet, curator of film at the Cinematheque Quebecoise in Montreal, died after a long illness on Jan. 3, 1997.

Louise Beaudet helped to build up the largest archive of animation in the world, and was instrumental in bringing many international animated films to North America (with the Museum of Modern Art's Adrienne Mancia) with the touring "Best of Zagreb" and "Best of Annecy" shows. Louise was extremely helpful to people programming animation retrospectives in museums and film festivals, making the substantial collection of the Cinematheque available for exhibition. She also was the author of pioneering articles and monographs on such topics as Charles Bowers and Canadian animation. Louise's lifetime achievement was recognized by a recent award from ASIFA and by being named as the Honourary President of the 1996 Ottawa International Animation Festival. ***--Mark Langer***



Barbera, Bilal, and Hanna by the Bay

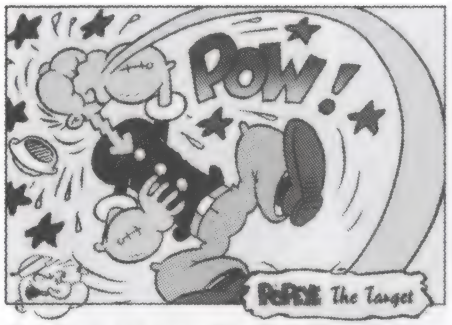
Enki Bilal, a Yugoslavian graphic artist appeared in San Francisco for a benefit screening of his two films, *Bunker Palace Hotel* and *Tykho Moon* at the AMC Kabuki Theatre. The screening of *Tykho Moon* qualifies as an American premiere and compliments a Bilal retrospective, *A City of Tears* which runs until May 25th at the Cartoon Art Museum.

For a complete change of style and attitude, the Cartoon Art Museum is hosting a retrospective, *The World of Hanna-Barbera* from June 4th through October 12th. Curator Paola Muggia Stuff says the original cels and production designs from Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear and Scooby-Doo will bring back fond memories for animation fans of all ages.

Earlier the Cartoon Art Museum featured the work of Edward Gorey, who is well known to animation fans for his drawings in the Derek Lamb animated intro for *Mystery!* on PBS. Also presented were original drawings from the Uncle Scrooge comic book series.

If you find yourself in San Francisco you can visit the Cartoon Art Museum at 814 Mission Street.

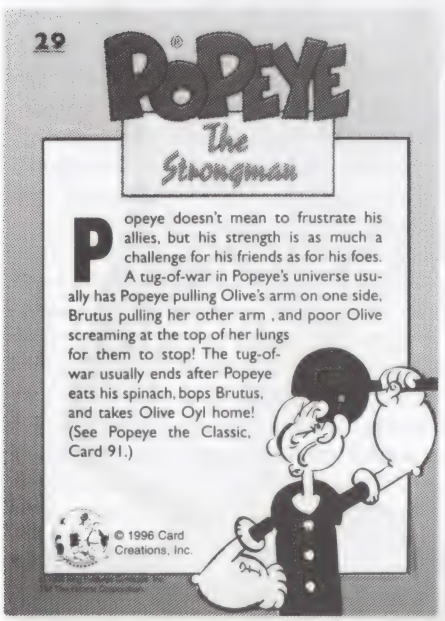
For info call: Lara Pepp 415-227-8669.



New Set of Popeye Trading Cards

If you're a Popeye fan and happen to be in your local K-Mart or Target stores, check out the new series of Popeye cards produced by Vintage Sports Cards. Divided into 11 different sub-sets, the set (with the exception of one sub-set) was written by Popeye historian and **ANiMATO!** contributor Fred M. Grandinetti. The 99 card set depict scenes from the sailor's comic strip and animation career. Proper cartoonists and animation studios are credited on the back of each card. Rarities, such as images from the Popeye slides from Kenner's vintage Give-A-Show toy projector and the seldom-seen television special *The Man Who Hated Laughter* are also featured in the set.

If you can't find the cards in your area, they are also available from the International Popeye Fan Club, 1001 State Street, Chester, IL 62233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POPEYE
The Strongman
Popeye doesn't mean to frustrate his allies, but his strength is as much a challenge for his friends as for his foes. A tug-of-war in Popeye's universe usually has Popeye pulling Olive's arm on one side, Brutus pulling her other arm, and poor Olive screaming at the top of her lungs for them to stop! The tug-of-war usually ends after Popeye eats his spinach, bops Brutus, and takes Olive Oyl home! (See Popeye the Classic, Card 91.)
© 1996 Card Creations, Inc.

Barker Animation Features Takamoto

If you enjoy Hanna-Barbera's dog detective take note, Iwao Takamoto, creator of Scooby-Doo, will be visiting Connecticut on June 27-28. Animation fans can meet Mr. Takamoto at the Barker Animation Galleries.

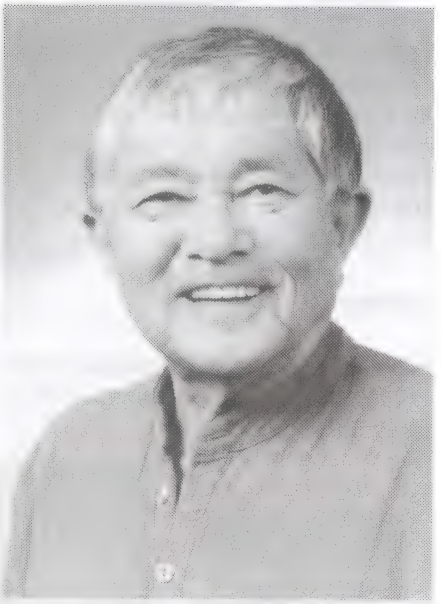
Summer Museum Focus

In our neck of the woods,the **Words and Pictures Museum** in Northampton, Massachusetts will be featuring artist Paul Mavrides and a selection of his original art.

Jan Svankmajer Honored At 40th San Francisco Film Festival

Surrealist animator Jan Svankmajer was honored with the inaugural **Golden Gate Award For Persistence of Vision**. The festival also premiered (North America) Svankmajer's *Conspirators of Pleasure*. New ANiMATO! writer Wendy Hall is in San Francisco to interview Svankmajer for the next issue.

Jan Svankmajer



Iwao Takamoto

DragonBall Z on International Channel

For anime fans who want their animation in its purest form: The International Channel is broadcasting *DragonBall Z* Sunday nights at 9:00 EST with original Japanese dialogue.

HBO Animation Launches Spawn

The animated version of Todd McFarlane's comic book *Spawn* debuted at midnight on HBO on May 16th. We will have a complete review in our next issue, but after viewing the first three episodes I think HBO Animation deserves credit for producing stunning adult series.

Gulliver's Travels Release

Cabin Fever Entertainment is releasing the 1939 Fleischer feature on video (SP Mode) June 17th for under $10.00.

Votoms and Angels

Central Park Media has announced that Volumes One through Five of the continuing *Votoms* saga will be available March 4, 1997 for the suggested retail price of $29.95. *Armored Trooper Votoms Stage:3 Deadworld Sunsa* is described as an epic science fiction adventure mixing love and war with high caliber mecha action.

CNP is also releasing *Twin Angels Volume 2*, also for March 4th. This Anime 18 production is from the same producers *of La Blue Girl.*

Musical Episode of Timon & Pumbaa Yields Big Ratings

The November 25, 1996 special episode of *The Lion King's Timon & Pumbaa* became the number one program, syndicated or network, for children ages 6 through 11. The episode won the series of its highest rating this season.

Produced by Tony Craig and Bob Gannaway with classical music arranged by Stephen James Taylor, the two cartoon shorts in the show had no dialogue and were reminiscent of the classic Disney feature *Fantasia*. Selections from Strauss, Haydn, Beethoven, and other composers were featured.

Walt Disney Studio Animation Art Releases Three new Sericels

Walt Disney Studio Animation Art Has released several new limited edition sericels. "Around The World With the Fabulous Five" depicts Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, Pluto, and Donald visiting Walt Disney World. "Best Friends" features Winnie the Pooh and Piglet hand-in-hand, while "Playful Pixie" shows Tinkerbell in a scene from Peter Pan. Each sericels retails for $275.00.

Universal Launches Major Effort in Direct-to-Video Animation

According to a story in the Dec. 29, 1996-Jan. 4, 1997 edition of *Video Store*, Universal Pictures, heartened by the success of its *Land before Time* franchise, will be producing a number of direct-to video animated releases. So far, the company has announced two additional *Land Before Time* installments and *Hercules and Xenia: The Animated Movie,* which should be on store shelves in the second half of this year.

New Advertising Limited Editions Released

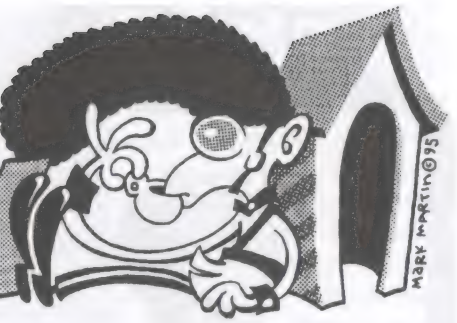
Name That Toon, the world's largest publisher of commercial advertising animation art is releasing four new cels including the first for the Campbell Soup Company featuring their classic trademark characters the Campbell Kids. Name That Toon is also releasing the first cel of the popular Bud Ice Penguin and also the most recent Bud Frogs cel in which the frogs commandeer the famed champion hydroplane speedboat, the Miss Budweiser. Also the company has released a limited edition from the new Coca-Cola Seal frolicking with Coke Polar Bear and cub.

United States Post Office Issues a Bugs Bunny Stamp

A self-adhesive stamp depicting the "Wascally Wabbit" with his trademark carrot, leaning against a rural mailbox, will be available in 10 stamp packets along with a collectible card.

"Don't lick me-I'm self adhesive!"
© Warner Bros

TOONTALK



By Andrew Osmond

Last time I was rather rude about Don Wildmon, saintly spokesman of the American Family Association and part-time toon critic. To give him his due, he's begun a global trend. Proof: a recent article in the Brit broadsheet paper *The Daily Telegraph.* Written by a Beverly Golden, the piece launches a Medvedian assault on the pernicious trash of Saturday morning TV, singling out imports like *Street Sharks, Biker Mice From Mars* and (for no obvious reason) the CGI series *Insektors.*

The picture presented is that of a nursery Tarantino, with cartoons instilling street-gang values and blurring the divide between good and evil. "Virtually all these programmes have supernatural themes which verge on the satanic," Golden writes. "If it is beauty and harmony which feeds the human spirit, the ugliness and discordant noise - there is a barrage of rock music, sound effects and nasty sounds - of these latest cartoons will surely damage the souls of our children."

Thank heavens Golden never encountered the "adult" sex/horror anime *Overfiend IV.* Nor will she, as the OAV series has been refused a video certificate by British censors. This is the second anime to be treated this way - the first was the equally notorious *La Blue Girl* - and in today's climate, when unreleased pics like *Crash* and *Lolita* make Brit headlines (usually "Ban this film!"), it's unlikely to be the last.

Enough imports - how about our own stuff? It's actually been rather quiet on the home front. Readers may have known about the debacle over Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!,* originally meant to feature stop-motion aliens in a tribute to Ray Harryhausen. The Manchester studio Bare Boards spent nine months animating the invaders, only to be told that CGI would be used instead. Supervisor Barry Purves, the creator of sublime shorts like *Achilles* and *Screen Play,* was so aggrieved he posted his side of the story on the Internet. Among other things, he argued that CGI was a wasteful luxury and that "limited means increase the animator's creativity." Be that as it may, it's doubtful we've heard the last of this "lost" animation.

On the TV side, the two main productions have been 54C's anthology *Testament* series and *Willows in Winter.* TVC's feature-length sequel to last year's *Wind in the Willows.* The latter - again screened on Christmas Day - was a disappointment. The voices and animation were up to the original's high standards, but the script, based on a novel by William (*Duncton Wood*) Horwood, merely rehashed Grahame's story and soon lost interest. (Personal alternative: Terry Jones' indulgent but charming live-action take on the tale, released last year.) Not the best of swansongs for TVC, producer of *Yellow Submarine* and *When the Wind Blows,* which sadly closes this year.

Bolex Brothers: Hutchinson and Borthwick

Testament was better, though the impeccable model animations were more consistent than the mixed-quality cel episodes. The "Ruth" episode was a particular standout, unspectacular but perfectly formed. The literate scripts were faithful to their Old Testament sources (i.e. violent!) but still less taxing than King Jimmy's version.

Three other series deserving mention are *Pond Life,* a Candy Guard sit-com with minimalist outline animation: Cosgrove-Hall's *Brambly Hedge,* a quartet of pre-school specials with stunning model sets; and *Gogs,* a claymation caveman comedy with very physical humour. The latter grunt'n'groan series was created by Welsh animators Deninol Morris and Michael Mort, and has already won the top animation award at Canada's Banff TV festival. The creators have been personally feted by Steven Spielberg, leading one to dread that *Gogs* may become a live-action travesty, *Flintstones*-style.

Meanwhile the Bolex Brothers Studio, responsible for the groundbreaking *Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb,* has made an irreverent short called *Saint Inspector,* featuring a fat, naked Buddha. A second short, *Keep In A Dry Place Away From Children,* appears in May. Meanwhile *Tom Thumb* maestros Borthwick and Richard Hutcheson have finished developing their next film, *Clusterworld.* Another studio, Tony Collingwood, has announced its own feature production, *The King's Beard.*

Fans of the Czech director Jan Svankmajer may know the British company Konninck helped fund his new film *Conspirators of Pleasure.* Like the surrealist's *Alice* and *Faust, Conspirators* combines animated effects with a live-action framework that's scarcely less bizarre. According to previews, the 75-minute feature is a dark sex comedy (best kind!), in which people make living voodoo artefacts for their own gratification.

That's it, except for a last recommendation: Paul Berry's *Sandman,* which I recently caught at a special screening. Berry is best known for *The Nightmare Before Christmas,* which this short resembles, but believe me *Sandman* is much scarier. The tale about a child terrified by a night-demon is beautiful and shocking, following the expressionist tradition of *The Cabinet of Caligari.* The final image is a killer. Watch if you can, but for heaven's sake don't show it to Beverly Golden... *--AO*

HOW TO ANIMATE AN ALIEN

The Computer Animation that made *Mars Attacks!* Possible

by Karl Cohen

When a friend was a child he had a set of *Mars Attacks* trading cards. The images of aliens abducting buxom women were so lurid he had to hide them from his mother. He recalls that the cards were banned in certain parts of the country.

Another person who remembered these cards made in 1962 by Topps is Hollywood producer-director Tim Burton. They inspired him to create the feature *Mars Attacks!* The aliens in it were brought to life in a secret lab in San Rafael, California, that is known as Industrial Light and Magic.

Mars Attacks! has a retro look based on the trading cards, and the style of low budget science fiction films and comic books of the 1950's and early Sixties. Unlike the space invaders of the past, Burton's aliens are not people wearing rubber masks or crudely animated stop-motion puppets. They were produced by state-of-the-art computers.

Creating the computer generated performers was a new kind of challenge for ILM's staff. They had already made wonderfully realistic dinosaurs, dragons and other creatures in their computers, but now a producer wanted a stylized look and characters that occasionally did humorous things. Lead character animator Jenn Emberly said it is difficult for some producers and directors to make up their minds about shots that combine real people and computer generated images, but Burton was clear about what he wanted. She said it was great working with him as his animation background prepared him for problems the ILM staff faced. She got to do wacky animation with a cartoony quality, and she said it was fun working on the feature.

When character animator Lou Dellarosa joined the crew he had mixed feelings about working on the film. When he began to understand the problems he would be facing trying to create solid performances with a series of identical looking ugly space monsters that didn't talk, he got excited about the project. He said that with computer animation there are always technical problems, but the film offered the chance to add personality to the Martians and to him entertaining the audience comes first. He called the film's stars "troubled teenagers." He liked the idea of trying to get a good laugh or two out of them as they try to mimic life on Earth. He also liked their vicious side as "it appeals to

the monsters within us. You get out your aggressions."

Just another animated guy from Mars © 1996 Warner Bros.

Although the finished film may look deceptively simple, for the animators, modelers, technical directors and the other artists and technicians at ILM it offered a series of technical and artistic problems to solve. Dellarosa, who was trained in traditional cel character animation at Disney, said the film "was a real challenge. You have to get across ideas with mime. The aliens have a deadpan look and no lips. All we see is their teeth. "They communicate as mimes, with eye contact and poses." As a result he tried to place his figures in areas where their silhouettes would not get lost in busy backgrounds so the poses were easy to see. He said his six years at Disney helped him get good performances out of his stars, especially in his shots in the war room sequence.

Dellarosa's greatest challenge was breathing life into aliens who were not the center of attention in a scene. He found it easy to move his main character(s) as the storyboards/script called for specific actions. His solution to giving life to the aliens who are simply observing the main action was to have them do subtle things like shift their weight and eyes and twitch their heads like lizards. Burton made it quite clear his aliens are not human. The animators had to create a balance between inhuman traits and human-like qualities so the audience could relate to them.

Breaking and entering © 1962 Topps

Chris Armstrong, a lead character animator who headed one of the teams of character animators that worked on the film, said it was difficult to learn how to move the aliens in a slightly jerky or staccato lizard-like movement. He was used to doing smooth computer animation on *The Mask, Casper* and *Dragonheart* at ILM, but Burton wanted something different.

One difficult sequence assigned to Armstrong showed aliens attaching a dog's head to Jessica Parker's body in an operating room. ILM shot footage of the dog and the woman using blue screen. Although the camera crew used great care in shooting the footage Armstrong says, "nothing ever goes seamlessly with computers and there is never a perfect match when the animator tries to composite the images together." As a result this sequence and others like it required a lot of computer paint work to touch-up the images so they look flawless. He said ILM has several kinds of specialists who do this sort of work. There are 2-D and 3-D painters, rotoscope artists, technical directors who work with color, lighting and textures, and other kinds of support groups. He credits sequence supervisor Ben Snow as the person who made the dog head images look natural on the big screen.

Armstrong's hardest problem was to animate the cape worn by the ambassador from Mars. He said, "it is hard to get cloth to animate properly. It is always a lot of work." On the other hand, animating their mouths was easy as the only sounds the aliens make is "ack ack." Before working on *Mars Attacks!* he had spent months animating the mouth of the talking dragon in *Dragonheart.*

Jenn Emberly was the lead character animator on the most complex computer generated sequence in the film. She and her six person team animated the fight between Byron (Jim Brown) and the ambassador from Mars. There are 55 Martians watching the fight in the background and when the ambassador, who doesn't know how to box, is killed, the 55 Martians go into a frenzy and attack.

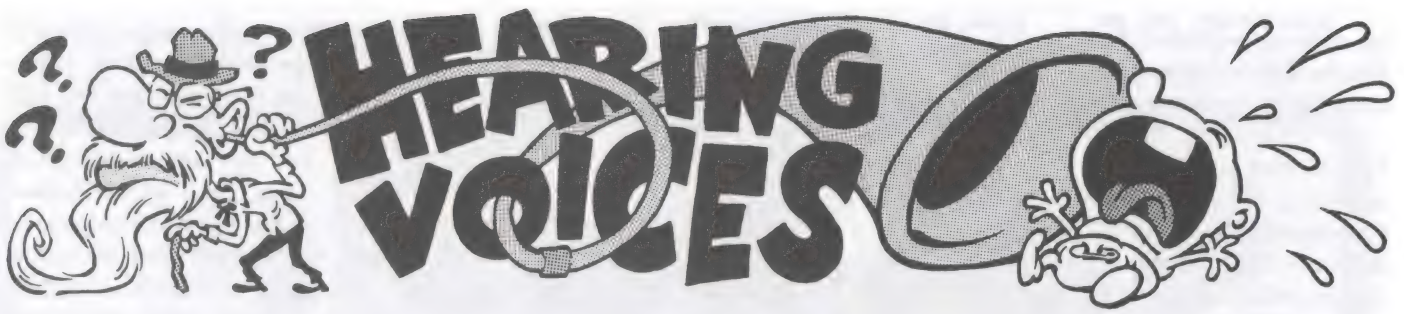
Emberly oversaw the production of the 25 shots in the sequence (most are from one to two seconds in length). She assigned some animators to work on the ambassador and the rest worked on the crowd. At first the crowd is in the background and doesn't do much. The action is between the two fighters. When one is killed she had to develop a sort of choreography for the crowd so each animator knew what their figures were supposed to do.

The family dog gets zapped © 1962 Topps

Emberly was given another tricky section to animate. She had to animate a Martian head on the body of actress Lisa Marie. Although she and her team of artists had the help of Match Mover Artist that helps to measure camera movements and build a computer model of the action to aid in the compositing of the elements, there was still a lot of detailed work to be done. She said a lot of hard tedious work was required to complete the sequence. The animators had to concentrate on subtle facial movements, especially eyebrows, and to match the movement of the head with the posture of the body.

ILM's work on *Mars Attacks!* is on the screen for about 20 minutes. It includes 250 scenes using 3-D images and 58 shots that include some form of com-

(Continued on Page 56)



Presenting Kent Rogers...In Persons!

Rogers was one of a group of talented mimics who supplied many voices for classic cartoons

by Keith Scott

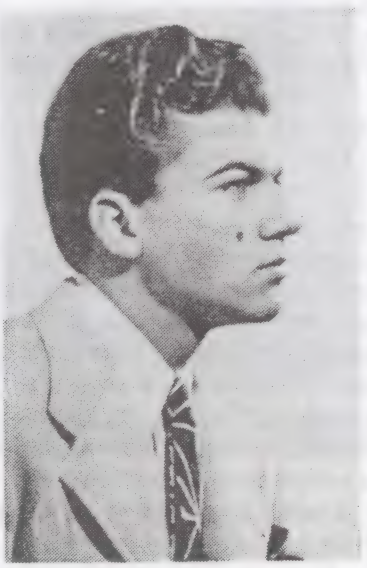
This issue's *Hearing Voices* column takes a brief look at a bevy of animation's most obscure and unique vocal talents. For those readers who think theatrical cartoon voices began and ended with Mel Blanc and June Foray, read on.

Hollywood's cartoon producers of the 1930's found themselves in a highly favorable casting climate when it came to populating the soundtracks of their films.

Just a few years into the sound era, the techniques of animation production and draughtsmanship had taken a quantum leap, with Walt Disney's impeccable standards leading the quest for constant improvement. The addition of color, along with rapid advances in sound recording technology, saw the cartoon film become increasingly sophisticated in a relatively short timespan. The directors soon realized that the old tradition of filling the soundtracks with "in-house" talent (mainly musicians and animators possessed of party-trick mimicry) would simply not be sufficient.

With anywhere from ten to thirty-plus titles released annually, a wide range of voices was constantly required for the seemingly endless array of zany animal and human cartoon characters on display. And so professional actors and comedians, particularly from radio where vocal versatility was a byword, were sought to deliver the ever more subtle and parody-based dialogue for 1930's animation.

Among the vast West Coast talent pool were several specialists from what is now an almost lost art-form. These were veteran performers from the world of vaudeville, the variety medium which was effectively dead and buried by the early Thirties, the recent victim of a changing entertainment scene in which movies and radio had emerged the triumphant winners. Many of the clever and stage-seasoned comics left in its wake were able to perform unique vocal tricks which have, by and large, disappeared from the entertainment agenda of today.



Kent Rogers

Walt Disney, Harman and Ising, and Ub Iwerks were quick to make excellent use of these unsung virtuosi: there were comic whistlers (including A. Purves Pullen, who performed as a specialty act with Ben Bernie's orchestra, and a decade later with the Spike Jones band where he was re-named Dr. Horatio Q. Birdbath); "spoonerizers" like Joe Twerp, heard to advantage in Tex Avery's *I Only Have Eyes For You* (1937), and Roy Atwell who performed the voice of Doc in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* There were comic stammerers like Ed Platt from the hillbilly comedy team of Oscar and Elmer; and the brilliant double-talk specialist Cliff Nazarro, whose finest animated showcase was as the emcee in Avery's *The Penguin Parade.*

As well, there were a raft of animal imitators, such as the aforementioned *Whistling* Pullen (who could imitate to perfection any bird or animal one cared to name), Dorothy Lloyd and the improbably named Count Gaetano Cutelli, who publicized himself as an Italian nobleman. One of the best known cartoon "animal" mimics was British-born Florence Gill, known as *The Barnyard Nightingale;* Disney made use of her abilities in several shorts as Dame Clara Cluck. There were even specialists in dog barks (Lee Millar and Pinto "Goofy" Colvig) and cat squawls (Harry Lang and Russ Powell).

This was still an era of experimentation in sound films, and any and all manner of novelty and trick voice artists in need of extra work quickly made their portfolios known to radio directors and animation shops. Useful too were comedy yodellers, and at least one instance of a genuine stutterer.

When the great Friz Freleng wanted to break from the established tradition of falsetto cartoon voices then in vogue (Mickey Mouse, Krazy Kat, Felix, Bosko), he employed a dress extra and bit part actor named Joe Dougherty, who had a pronounced speech impediment, to play a comic scene in his Mississippi riverboat cartoon, *Into Your Dance.* Soon after this he got Dougherty back to play the original Porky Pig in the amusing schooldays short *I Haven't Got a Hat* (1935) which put Porky on the map, and gave the Schlesinger Studio its first successful (and desperately needed) "star" personality.

It's been documented elsewhere that Dougherty continued playing Porky Pig until Mel Blanc took over at the start of

1937. As Freleng revealed, Dougherty's stammer was so chronic that he often wasted many feet of raw magnetic film in the era before audio tape; the cartoonists were scared that if Jack L. Warner was made aware of this costly fact, he'd hit the roof. Blanc's unique ability to control a faked comic stutter, and his more flexible and likeable characterization of Porky, meant the end of Joe Dougherty's career in cartoons.

Far and away the most gainfully employed voice "specialty artists" were the mimics, those handy performers who could faithfully reproduce the speaking and singing voices of the myriad movie and radio stars of the era.

Just a few of the imitators who found that there was extra work to be had in cartoons include radio impressionists like Arthur Boran, Jean Noble, Noreen Gamill, Lind Hayes (later known as Peter Lind Hayes), Colleen Collins and Steve White. Stage and nightclub mimics were also on call, including the Three Radio Rogues who were particularly strong on singing impressions, and young Al Bernie (who supplied a superb Charles Laughton, in his famed *Mutiny on the Bounty* persona of Captain Bligh, for Disney's *Mother Goose Goes Hollywood*). Certain vocal xeroxers proved outstanding for cartoons, and enjoyed long careers in animation.

Sara Berner became known as the girl of a thousand voices from 1939 to 1950 (before the delightful June Foray supplanted her). Berner was often heard mimicking Katharine Hepburn in Tex Avery's Warner cartoons, including *Daffy Duck in Hollywood* and *Dangerous Dan McFoo.* She also essayed splendid interpretations of Mae West, Bette Davis and character actress Edna Mae Oliver (the latter was heard in Freleng's *The Hardship of Miles Standish*).

Elvia Allman, undoubtedly one of the funniest women ever heard in radio comedy shows, did a less accurate - though no less endearing - Kate Hepburn in Avery cartoons like *Little Red Walking Hood,* before the arrival of Ms. Berner. And together these two versatile ladies supplied all the gossiping horses in the fine MGM cartoon *Gallopin' Gals'* (1940), an early effort by the new team of Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera.

The vogue for animated movie star caricatures tended to die out post-World War II, although the Warner Brothers cartoonists carried on with occasional tributes to their "tough-guy studio" image even into the early 1950's. Sharp, hilarious takeoffs of WB bad guys Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson and Peter Lorre adorned cartoons like *Slick Hare,* featuring Dave Barry as Bogie, *Racketeer Rabbit* with Dick Nelson doing a funny Eddie Robinson, and *Birth of a Notion* with Nelson scoring again as a superbly querulous Lorre.

Just before World War II, there were a few entertaining all-star cartoons, including the ultimate example by the ever-innovative Tex Avery: Warner's *Hollywood Steps Out* (1941). This splendid Merrie Melodie celebrated the glamourous era which saw the flourishing of the film capital's great nightclubs, like the

Dick Nelson

Trocadero, the *Mocambo* and *Ciro's* (now trading, in a regrettably glamour-less and jaded 1990's, as *The Comedy Store*).

Hollywood Steps Out continued the tradition of movieland caricatures that had begun in 1930's cartoons like *The Coo-Coo Nut Grove,* and which had culminated in the most technically accomplished of them all, Disney's superb Silly Symphony *Mother Goose Goes Hollywood* (1938).

Avery's cartoon featured Sara Berner's imitations of Greta Garbo and Dorothy Lamour (she also did the two cigarette girls - another icon from a bygone time), while virtually all the male voices were performed by a young man not yet in his mid 20's. This was Kent Rogers, a juvenile lead and tenor singer who was trying to establish a movie career.

Kent had appeared in "bit" roles, and a few featured parts, in various films, and was then being showcased in a Hal Roach featurette called *All American Co-Ed* (1941).

For *Hollywood Steps Out,* the youthful Mr. Rogers essayed the voices of such cinema heavyweights as Cary Grant, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Mickey Rooney, James Stewart, Peter Lorre, Clark Gable, sourpuss actor Ned Sparks, the teenage radio character Henry Aldrich (*Coming, Mother!* ; this recording was re-used in several more Warner cartoons), and Groucho Marx. In all he produced a dozen splendid impressions for this cartoon. Based on this lone appearance, Rogers proved one of the finest mimics in animation, and a worthy successor to the best of his predecessors, Dave Weber, covered by Hames Ware in a previous article in this series.

Rogers was employed again by Bob Clampett for the role of Beaky Buzzard in *Bugs Bunny Gets the Boid.* Soon thereafter he worked for MGM (in Avery's hilarious *Who Killed Who?*), Universal (for Walter Lantz), and at Paramount, for the *Speaking of Animals* shorts and, teamed once more with Sara Berner, the voices of the talking camels in the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby comedy, *The Road to Morocco.*

Then, just as Kent Rogers was heading for bigger things in Hollywood, he was "caught in the draft," and enlisted for service in World War II. Tragically, this feisty and talented young performer was killed in July, 1944. He had recorded some lines for the follow-up Beaky entry *The Bashful Buzzard,* but when further work was needed on this cartoon, Bob Clampett had to get some of the character's lines matched by a mimic who could essentially mimic another mimic! And so enter one Stan Freberg.

When Rogers enlisted in the armed forces, another excellent voice-man, Dick Nelson, became ubiquitous in Walter Lantz and MGM Cartoons. It was Nelson, for example, who did the Frank Morgan voice narrating Lantz's 1941 *Mother Goose*

(Continued on Page 62)

8,000 Films and Counting:

Everything You Always Wanted To Know About The National Film Board Of Canada

By Gord Wilson.

Interview with Jan Clemson

Jan Clemson is a film historian and former Marketing Director for the National Film Board of Canada.

GW: The NFB icon, an enigmatic little eye with legs, seems to show up on everything coming out of Canada. What does the Film Board do, and how did it begin?

JC: A lot of people think it's a censorship organization—it's got that rather uninspiring name. It goes back to 1939, when the Canadian government created lots of boards under Prime Minister McKenzie King. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—CBC—had been created a few years earlier, and they wanted to bring the various fledgeling film organizations together under one roof. The NFB was created to "interpret Canada to Canadians through the medium of film"—to Canadians, and to our neighbors aboad. They brought in a Scottish guy named John Grierson to advise the government on film. He was the first Canadian Government Film Commissioner and founder of the NFB.

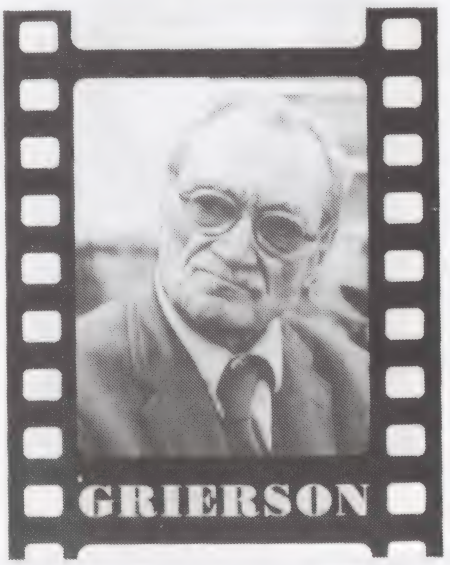
GW: Can you talk about Grierson?

JC: He worked for the General Post Office in Britain, and made a film, *Night Mail*, about people who sorted ordinary mail on the night train when it went from London to Edinburgh. British film up until then showed the leisure classes, so this was a new way of getting to what ordinary people did. Grierson also worked with the American John Flaherty, who made Nanuck of the North—they were quite pals. He made another film, *The Drifters*, about North Sea fishermen. For these Grierson is called "the Father of the Documentary."

Canada was far flung; our communications systems were basically the telegraph, the railroad and letters, so the NFB was created to make documentary films. The NFB started in Ottawa, Ontario, in an old saw mill refurbished as a film studio, and in 1955 moved to Montreal to be closer to the creative talent. Montreal was considered a creative center, and quite cosmopolitan.

GW: What happened when the war broke out in 1939?

JC: The film board essentially became a kind of propaganda agency for Canada and Allied



John Grierson

Forces. It began with propagandistic intentions, because that was the year the war broke out. Grierson was a master at this. He admired Leni Riefenstahl, who made the great Olympiad film showing Jesse Owens beating the aryan youth in Germany, which made Hitler furious. While we don't like her politics, she was a brilliant filmmaker. She made the famous *Triumph of the Will* to extol Nazi values. Grierson obtained a copy of the negative, and used pieces of it in the wartime films the Film Board made, to feed back against the Nazis. He was like Frank Capra in America who made the *Why We Fight* series, and also *It's a Wonderful Life*.

GW: When did they begin in animation?

JC: Grierson knew a young fellow from the Glasgow School of Art who was turning things upside down. That was Norman McLaren, who had gone to New York and was working with Len Lei, playing around with abstractions. Grierson brought McLaren to the Film Board in 1942. McLaren worked on some purely abstract films, very avant garde. Audiences were preplexed at first, and didn't know what to make of them. Yet, they were intrigued, and he became the spiritual leader of Canadian animators. His films in the forties were winning awards at festivals around the world, and continued to do so throughout his life. He directed and produced around 75 films during his career.

GW: What are some of his best-known films?

JC: His 1952 film, *Neighbors*, became one of the most controversial films the NFB ever made, because there was too much violence. It created such a reaction, especially in the movie industry, that cinemas would not show it. Schools wouldn't show it, so McLaren actually took out the most brutal scene. That was up until the the Vietnam war, when people had seen so much bloodletting at the dinner table. Then it was OK to put the scene back in and distribute the film as it was originally made.

It's always been a very popular film. What inspired it was a trip McLaren had taken to China to teach filmmaking as part of a United Nations crew, when he had witnessed incredible violence. He was so moved by it he wanted to make a film trying to express the stupidity and futility of killing yourself over possession of property.

GW: Doesn't that film use pixillation?

JC: Yes. The theme has become a staple of cartoons, and the technique, the "McLaren pixillation," a staple of comedies. Using single frame shots, you can move people around in ways that are humanly impossible. That put him in the limelight, which wasn't what he wanted. He was an incredibly shy person—almost a recluse, and couldn't appear in front of an audience and talk. He was always the experimenter. He did realistic animation, scratching on film, painting on clear film, cameraless animation, pixillation, soft pastel transitions—you name it.

Pas De Deux, which I think is perhaps his greatest film, named for a ballet term meaning "Dance for Two," has these dancers kind of coming out of their bodies and going back into their bodies. To make Hen Hop, which is done to square dance music, he spent two days in a chicken coup watching the move-

Some of the 8,000 Films

ments of chickens. His last film was *Narcissus*, based on the Greek myth, in 1983. What McLaren did was put Canada on the map in terms of animation.

GW: How does the NFB make a film?

JC: In the beginning, anyone who wanted to work and make a film became an NFB employee on the government payroll. You were a civil servant—well, not always civil, but you were supposed to serve. The French part of the NFB came later. There was very little francophone film making—it was all anglophone. In 1966, the NFB regionalized, when it realized it wasn't representing Canada properly from Montreal.

Vancouver, B.C., and Halifax, on the East Coast of Nova Scotia, the two bookends of the country, were the first two regional centers. We tried to hire folks with some artistic talent to make films on a contract and project basis for the NFB. At one time 90% of the ideas for films came from filmmakers and the Film Board, but gradually more input began coming from the public and pressure groups.

GW: Practically every film coming out of Canada either bears the little NFB logo or thanks the NFB for assistance. How do you assist filmmakers?

JC: TeleFilm Canada works like the National Endowment for the Humanities in the states, but the NFB doesn't. We do have an assistance program for filmmaker's first and second films. Here you are, just out of film school, you're broke, with a passion for making films. We give space, cels, animation stands, cameras, basic help. We have no interest in ownership—we support creator's rights. Our goal is to give indiginous Canadian filmmakers a start. We're in some co-production partnerships, with funding from a little up to a half. Animation still tends to be fully funded.

GW: Your catalog has these dazzling, award-winning films side-by-side with down-to-earth, rather boring technical documentaries.

JC: The Film Act in Canada, passed by Parliament in 1939, made the NFB the government's filmmaker. For years and years any federal agency that wanted to make a film about labor policy, health attitudes, and so on had to go to the NFB. Recently the Film Act was changed so that agencies can go to whomever they like.

We've had a wide mix of things from the start, from *Muck Soil Development*, made for farmers about how to get your soil to produce better, to something completely esoteric. When I was at Filmsoc at UBC—the 16mm campus film society at University of British Columbia—I had a buddy working for the Cineplex Odeon theater chain. When he wanted to clear the theater between shows he'd put on *Milking Parlors and Pole Barns*, and everyone would leave. That's an example of a turkey we've done.

We had one animated short called *Stanley Takes a Trip*. During the 1960s it became quite popular because no one knew what kind of film it was. They'd see it in the catalog and put it on with a light show, but it was about taking care of your teeth. McLaren's films were used a lot that way too, flickering on the wall in light shows. They fit into that psychedelic kind of stuff.

GW: I notice many of the films come with study guides. Do they all need to be didactic?

JC: Schools have always been our major audience, and some films are propagandistic, promoting Canadian values and Canadian culture. The government puts up special money through the Multicultural Secretariat to make films on multicultural issues—anti-racism films, for example. *Every Child*, which won an Oscar, is marvelous, but has some didacticism imposed on it because it was made with monies from the United Nations during the Year of the Child.

Nobody really comes to the Film Board and forces them to make a film, of course. You don't want to be too heavy-handed or everyone will be turned off, so you wend your way through what is publically acceptable. The Film Board wants these films to be successful in the market, so we give them a so-called educational spin. From the beginning, we've had study guides for use in the classroom.

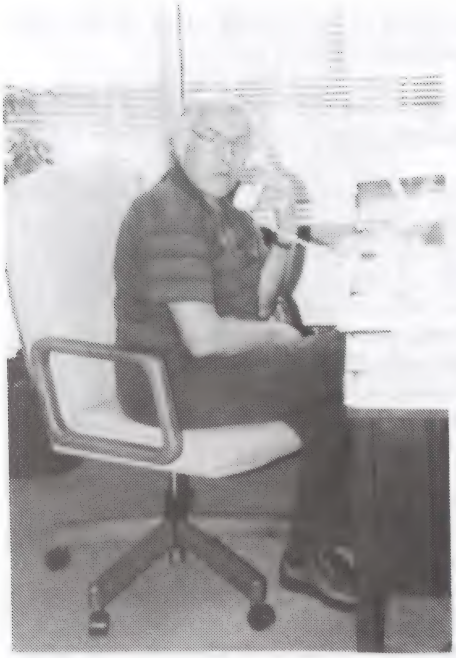
Just released is an animated film about sexual abuse—a really hilarious topic. This is a film for teenagers who've been sexually abused to help them overcome their trauma and get on with their life, so we produce a handbook for therapists along with the film. It has some technically advanced, very complicated animation, along with live action. Some people might say that's too earnest, but over the years we've developed a kind of reputation. As another example, *Health Canada*, formerly the Ministry of Health, has supported films to help people having mental breakdowns. All under the documentary rubric.

GW: A number of NFB films won Academy Awards.

JC: *Neighbors* in 1953 won the second of eight NFB Oscars. Co Hoedeman won an Oscar for his animated film, *The Sandcastle*, in 1978. *If You Love This Planet* was a 1982 film about Helen Caldecott's campaign against nuclear escalation that President Reagan tried to ban. She was a medical doctor from Australia. Reagan didn't like the film and tried to supress it, which of course ensured fantastic distribution; it was our best unpaid advertisement. Terry Nash made the film after the Washington archives had been opened, with footage of Hiroshima, to make the plea, "let's not blow ourselves up." That was during the cold war tension.

GW: Most people know the NFB for its animated films.

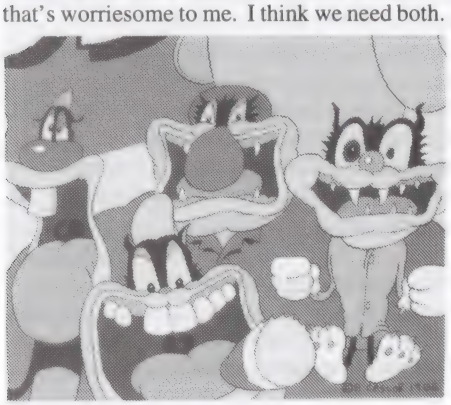
JC: Animation doesn't return much money. it's



Jan Clemson on the job.

an aesthetic product most of the time—an artistic expression of the subject matter, and not in the money-making mainstream. If it gets on the Mike and Spike circuit, that's a big coup, but it still doesn't bring in much money. At one time we used to get a lot of shorts in theaters. Before the onslaught of television, we'd have a short along with the movie, and sometimes a documentary up to twenty minutes long. A lot of folks saw our animation where it should be—on the big screen in its full glory—not on a stupid damn television set.

Here people work night and day to get all these subleties and nuances in, and the only way you're going to see that is on a 35mm projection. One of our major coups was that in Canada, *The Cat Came Back,* made by Cordell Barker in Winnipeg, was paired with *A Fish Called Wanda*. A fantastic combination. Is entertainment taking the upper hand over artistic expression? Things done for aesthetic reasons alone are starting to come under a lot of pressure. Doing for the beauty of film or subect matter is far more scrutinized these days, and that's worriesome to me. I think we need both.



Independent Animation in the Great White North: An interview with Erik Eriksen

(Svend) Erik Eriksen is Executive Producer of Animation and Multimedia for the Western Provinces of the National Film Board of Canada.

GW: Jan talked about the NFB offices as bookends bracketing the country. When did animation take off in the western provinces?

EE: There wasn't a lot of animation happening on the British Columbia side until 1970. KVOS TV in Bellingham Washington had an animation studio in Vancouver, Canawest Productions, which did a number of jobs for Hanna-Barbera, such as the inking and painting for the Sat AM sitcom, *Wait 'Till Your Father Gets Home*. Most of the people I graduated with at the Vancouver School of Art worked at Canawest, and that's where I really learned to work at a studio.

The kind of animation taught in those days was very individualistic, the sort of way the Film Board does animation, which is very different than the industry. Another player was Al Sens, who worked at Simon Fraser University. We did the biggest animations—ten minute cel animations—but they were one offs, not a series. We used students from the Vancouver School of Art and did everything here except the shooting, which was done in Montreal. In 1976, just over twenty years ago, we got a camera and started shooting here.

By using private sector services for everything, we tried to develop the infrastructure for animation in town. We trained people by doing a series of 30 second to 2 minute vignettes, like the very short pieces you see on the Rocketship Reel, to provide employment for people in the late Seventies, when employment here was pretty tough.

GW: Where does Marv Newland come in?

EE: Marv Newland was originally from California. He'd done *Bambi Meets Godzilla*, and that was his calling card. He came to Vancouver from Toronto, where he'd done a brief stint, and started International Rocketship. I shot some animation for him on *Sing Beast Sing* and part of *Anijam*, a collaborative effort of 22 animators, which includes Sally Cruikshank and some American artists. I think it was concocted at Annecy or someplace like that. *Hooray for Sandbox Land* was paid for by the Insurance Corporation of B.C.. The point was to make a film to show to kindergarten and elementary school kids throughout the province to promote safe driving.

GW: Yet it still has that skewed underground comix look you associate with Marv's stuff.

Erik Eriksen

EE: Marv always does the kind of thing he wants to do. Other animation places in town will do what you want them to. There's a big difference, and he attracts both frustration and admiration. Most of the Vancouver operations are boutique places—small operations that expand from time to time, depending on productions. Danny Antonuchi worked on a lot of films with Marv, and then he did *Lupo the Butcher*, which became a big hit. He attracted the interest of an American producer in a series—MTV and *The Brothers Grunt.*

Danny was a rebellious figure, but then you see Lupo in the Converse tennis shoe commercials. Marv's place has always been the most creative place in Vancouver in terms of the most crazy people, which is really what you want in a shop—you want really crazy, nutty people. They've done some films for the NFB, and we may want them to do a film for us soon, because of what they bring to it. This will be a kid's film, but it's got to be a little skewed, and Marv is good at skewed.

The Edmonton NFB studio did a film called *Cactus Swing* which was shown in theatres across Canada, and we're hoping this new one will be funny enough for general audiences. A lot of the more esoteric animations which are beautiful to look at or complicated storywise don't make it to the big screen because they don't appeal to a general audience. The Film Board has a contract with Famous Players Theatres in Canada, which shows these as theatrical shorts, but they need to be entertaining and can't have a lot of thinking in them. Sometimes the more esoteric stuff shoves into the animation festivals.

GW: Who else has the NFB got on board?

EE: Caroline Leaf, who did *The Street*, was originally from Massachusetts, and worked with Derek Lamb at Harvard. When he moved up to be executive producer of the animation studio at the Film Board, she joined him and has been there ever since. Her most recent film was *Two Sisters*. Ryan Larkin was one of my instructors at the Vancouver Institute of Art, who came from Montreal to teach animation for a two year stint. He made *Syrinx*, based on a Greek myth, followed by *Walking*, which was nominated for an Academy Award. He was so brilliant the Film Board opened the door for him. He recently made a film called *Street Musique*, shot in Vancouver.

Ishu Patel came from India as a student and stayed on. He explores the history of conflict in *The Bead Game,* simply by manipulating little beads. He also made a beautiful, luminous film version of a fable called *Paradise*. Kaj Pindal made a short that many people have seen called *What On Earth*, about Martians who assume that motor cars are the dominant life form on earth. The credits say National Film Board of Mars. Bretislav Pojar came from Czechoslovakia and made an extremely witty film called *To See or Not to See*. He also collaborated with Jacques Drouin, who animates using a pinscreen process, on a 1986 film called *Nightangel*.

I was the producer of Martin Rose's latest film, *Trawna Tuh Belvul*. We asked him to do the story, based on a poem by Earle Birney. Martin's a perfectionist, and took eight years to film the 14 minute piece, using well over 10,000 photographs. He built puppets and backgrounds for a multiplane design using cutouts and shadows. You run into incredible problems with hot spots and reflections, which aren't a problem using flat mutiplane without the shadows. We had about six lights per plane, with a computer system to run the table and camera. It seemed deceptively simple, but took a lot of shooting—a ten second shot took five days to set up, six or seven days to shoot, and then there'd be a reflection, so we'd have to reshoot it. The finished film is very unusual and has a beautiful look to it.

These sorts of films have a very personal stamp—only that person can render in that particular way—so it's hard to have a crew. We made *Good Things Can Still Happen*, a sponsored film for kids who've been sexually abused, with 14 minutes of animation in ten months. But we crewed it up, and it didn't cost any more than if it had taken three people seven years to make. You spend the money now or you spend it later.

GW: Who's working at the Montreal studio?

EE: Gerald Potterton, who did *George and the Star*, has a company in Montreal which does commercial work. He, Wolf Koenig and Derek Lamb were part of a group of people who did innovative cel films in the 'Sixties. Derek and company did The Great Toy Robbery. That's one of those innovative films from the 'Sixties using minimal animation but with a disturbing story. Paul Driessen is Dutch, but he's worked a lot in Canada. His latest is *Getting There*. Francois Aubry, who made Nocturnes also did special FX for the film, *Jesus of Montreal*.

A typical NFB animation stand

Chris Hinton's *Blackfly* is a Film Board film. He works on contract to the Film Board in Montreal, and most recently made a short, graphic piece of media criticism called *Watching TV*. The same with Co Hoedeman, who won an Academy Award for *Sand Castle*. Richard Condie, who did *The Big Snit* and*Getting Started,* is working on a 3D opera called *The Playroom*. I shot 99% of Brad Caslor's *Get a Job*. He's in Winnipeg, and you can tell from the film's look that his patron saint is Tex Avery. One of the people behind Tony DePeltrie was a founder of Softimage, and it served as a testbed for the software, now used in *ReBoot* and numerous other animations. They're all animation auters, people who have their own style and do their own animation and stories for the most part, but that's very different from the industry.

GW: Could you comment on the distinction?

EE: For the most part animators work as hired guns for other companies. Nelvana in Toronto is by far the biggest studio in Canada. They did *A Cosmic Christmas, Beetlejuice, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* and *Savage Steve Holland's Eek! Stravaganza*. Cinar is the second. They're in Montreal, and work a lot in co-productions with French companies. Their work is commercial, but has a lot of quality to it. They're a very well-run company that does a lot of kids' animation. They did *Tin Tin by Herge, Madeline, The Busy World of Richard Scarry,* and the new *Little Lulu.* Nelvana gets most of its peple from Sheridan College in Ontario, while many NFB people have gone to work for Cinar. On the westside, Martin Rose and a lot of NFB people have come from the Emily Carr School of Art and Design, while the Vancouver Film School is more industry-oriented.

GW: Is there a shift away from the more artistic stuff in the Nineties?

EE: The idea of a space where people had a lot of freedom to do their own thing is really a Sixties and Seventies way of thinking. In the Eighties people got down to business, and things became more entertainment-oriented, because that's where the money is. In the Nineties, we're into a period of reflection, especially as we approach the millenium. The biggest bulk of the population are in their 30s and 40s—that's where spending and political power are. That generation is becoming tired of the low end stuff and wants something with a little more to think about, more something to get you going, than the usual formula stuff. As an adult, you want to be enticed, you want to see quality, and artists want more and more quality in the work that they do.

GW: How does that bode for the Film Board?

EE: I think it bodes quite well. The stakes are getting higher in terms of the complexity of ideas and the entertainment value has to be honed to a very high level. Production values have to be extremely high, and that means expensive. All those things are happening while the budget is being downscaled, but at the same time the tools get more powerful. An animator doing 2D animation might hire a few people to do drawings and scan them in, and then render, composite and shoot everything inside the computer, as well as doing sound layouts in the computer. Instead of paying a crew of people, you can lease a computer system or write it off on taxes.

The rendering time for 2D is going to be far less than for 3D. *Jetsons The Movie*, for instance, got a look that was basically 2D with a little shading. What computers really do is bring the process closer to the artist. You're shrinking time because these tools can make things happen quickly and you can change your mind and alter things. Instead of having to telegraph your intentions to a crew of people, you can ink and paint your own work using Animo by Cambridge Animation Systems or Creative 'Toons by Softimage. Microsoft bought Softimage, and they're porting the program from UNIX to work on Windows NT.

The Film Board's Computer Animation Centre plans to market its own FLIP software, which is a program for shooting and coloring traditional animation. It's showcased on the film, *Mirrors of Time*, along with 3D Wavefront animation. If you can scan the characters in, you can do composite cels, pans and zooms, and you no longer need an animation camera. It's a matter of staging and choreography. Hanna-Barbera did that years ago with limited animation. Yogi Bear running would go on file, and you'd drop that into an episode, so there was a minimum of new animation needed for each show. With the computer that can all be put on file, and you build up a powerful backlog of software over time. A show like ReBoot continually grows, since each episode can draw on a backlog of sets and characters from other shows.

GW: What are you doing now?

EE: I'm starting a film called Joe, which is a cutout film shot with a digital camera rendered directly on the computer. We just finished a little demo film by an aboriginal filmmaker called Totem Talks, which has totem characters moving around in live action space. It shows how traditional First Nations designs can be represented in 3D using a Silicon Graphics workstation to composite on the computer. Animation is a natural application for these sorts of designs, and there are lots of young people with art training in First Nations who we're trying to open up room for.

GW: It seems like you're on a mission from God, as it were, to keep independent animation alive.

EE: When artists have to go out and make a living, they soon discover that the look people want out there is very generic. People coming out of schools like Emily Carr, on the other hand, where the animation taught is of the creative variety, usually have no industry experience. They don't know what's possible, and they're willing to try all sorts of adventurous ideas. That's why they're original. Often times they're developing a kind of look which hasn't gotten ground down.

A lot of the traditional stuff, although it was great in its day, gets done over and over, and oftentimes the stories are not what they could be. Then along comes something that breaks the mold, like Joe Murray's wonderful Rocko. Rocko's great because the characters are great, and the circumstances they find themselves in, which constitute the story, are so weird and strange that you find yourself fascinated watching the stuff. What I like about young people is the kind of energy and excitement and imagination they put into their work, and here they get to work in a field that they love. An animation studio has got to be one of the best places to work. It's always a funny, crazy environment, and the people are a little loopy. Although it's real nose-grinding work, it's like playtime.

An Incomplete Guide to NFB Animation on Video

Tournee of Animation (Volume One): Includes: Tony DePeltrie; Anna and Bella; Charade; and Anijam, a collage by 22 animators including Kaj Pindal, Paul Driessen and Brad Caslor.

Leonard Maltin's Animation Favorites from NFB of Canada:
Includes: Begone Dull Care and Pas De Deux by Norman McLaren; The Cat Came Back; The Sweater; The Street; Getting Started; Log Driver's Waltz; and Anniversary, a computer-generated bumper celebrating NFB's 50th anniversary.

Rocketship Reel: Includes: Bambi Meets Godzilla; Sing Beast Sing; Hooray for Sandbox Land; Anijam; Black Hula; Lupo the Butcher; and short test pieces.

Cel Mates: Profiles of three animators: Richard Condie; Cordell Barker; and Brad Caslor.

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Gord Wilson in a freelance writer and animation historian from the great Northwest.

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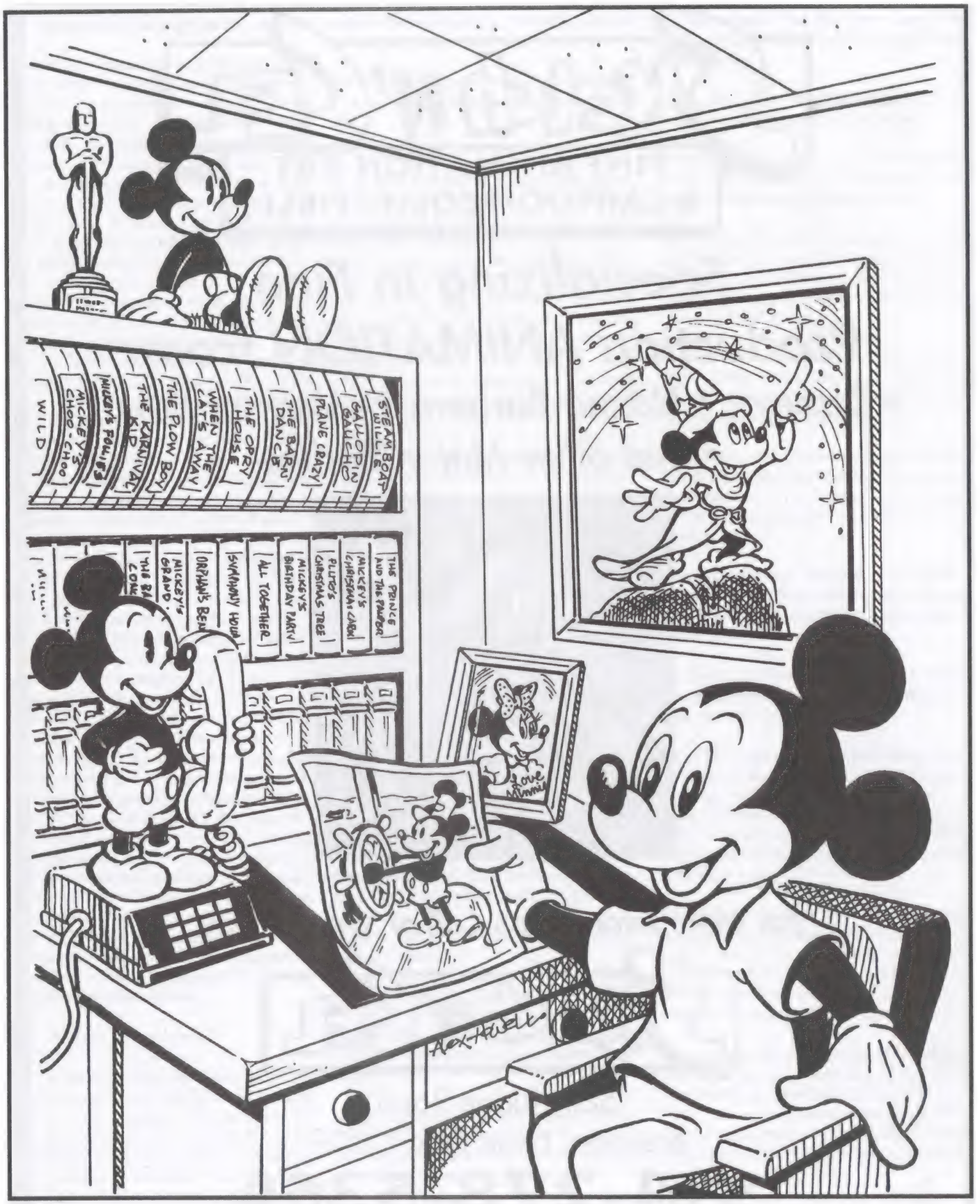
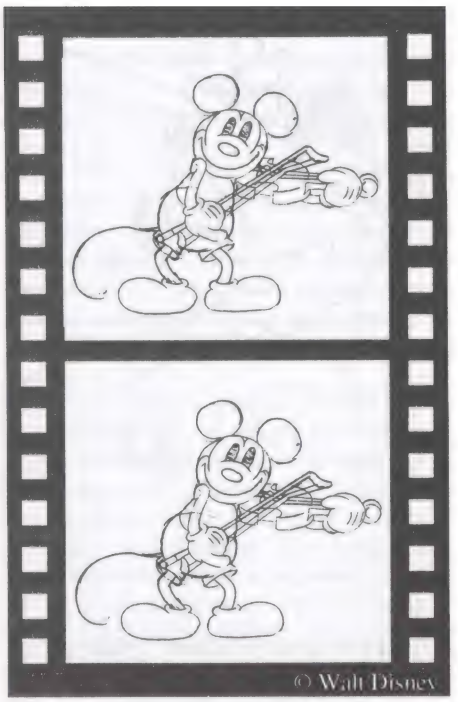


Mickey Mouse comic strip artist Alex Howell's excellent original pen and ink version of our cover art.

Character Mickey Mouse © Walt Disney Company

MICKEY MOUSE

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MOUSE



Before becoming a cultural and corporate icon Mickey Mouse actually was a cartoon star! David Gerstein explores the early years of the world's most famous mouse.

by David A. Gerstein

In recent years, surveyors of Disney history have largely cast aside the early Mickey Mouse cartoons in their haste to discuss Disney's later color cartoons and features. Film historian Leonard Maltin states that Mickey himself suffered from a "nondescript" personality, and one collection of vintage Mouse comics announces that "it was in the daily and Sunday comic strips that [Mickey's] greatest adventures took place."

In fact, the early animated Mouse was more at one with Floyd Gottfredson's comic-strip Mickey than most people realize today. Like the Gottfredson Mouse, the screen rodent was not only the central figure in the majority of his films but was clearly used to his best advantage in this role, which brought out both a dynamic personality and a witty sense of humor in Mickey's character. The reason few historians have recognized this in recent years is due to the general unavailability of 75 black-and-white cartoons constituting the majority of the Mouse's filmography. While many were broadcast on the Disney Channel in its earlier years, this slowed around 1988; and while early Disney videotape releases featured a few vintage entries, recent tapes aimed less at the collector market and more at the juvenile one have failed to include the early episodes.

A viewer who sees the color films alone may be dazzled by the superb, mature animation or by the fine performances of Donald Duck, Goofy, and Pluto, but will feel little enthusiasm for Mickey. In those later cartoons, the Mouse's role is that of a straight man: aloof from the majority of comic situations, Mickey largely stands back and watches while others supply the havoc. It is not hard to cast aside the Mouse's importance, as a character, to the series. But growing up as I did, watching the Disney Channel in its early years and reading a steady diet of Gottfredson reprints, I found and still do find Mickey to be one of the most refreshing and enjoyable fictional personalities in creation. In the present analysis, I will discuss how the vintage cartoons developed and maintained this appeal, how Mickey and other characters evolved and were used to best advantage together, how this golden age ended, and how it could return.

1928-1929: Finding a Niche

The first two years of the Mickey series might be called the "Ub Iwerks Period," when animation pioneer Ub Iwerks was still working at the Disney Studio and heavily influenced the feel of its product. Yet truthfully, the "Iwerks-Disney Period" might be the better term, for it was while Iwerks was head animator that Walt Disney himself directed most of the Mouse's cartoons. During this period the series was groping for a consistent style. Individual cartoons vary in technical quality and pacing, and even Mickey's voice is different in some episodes (apparently provided by Carl Stalling, then the studio musician). Mickey himself is drawn at various sizes: while in *Steamboat Willie* (1928) and *The Karnival Kid* (1929) Mickey stands about four feet tall, *When the Cat's Away* (1929) portrays Mickey as being the size of a common household rodent. Mickey's personality at first owes something to that of Otto Messmer's Felix the Cat: in *Plane Crazy* (1928) Mickey paces back and forth much like Felix, and in *Gallopin' Gaucho* (1928) he uses his tail as a pulley, just as Messmer's cat had done several times. However, while Felix was meticulous and thoughtful, Mickey as portrayed in these early films was brash and impulsive. In *The Plowboy* (1929) he maneuvers a cow's udder to squirt her in the face with her own milk, while in *The Barnyard Battle* (1929) he faces a crowd of German World War I enemies only to stop and, in a moment of ill-timed patriotism, razz them.

In some of the earliest cartoons, Mickey is shown as a lecher: in *Plane Crazy* he forces his attentions on Minnie in their airplane, while in *The Plowboy* he drools at her approach and kisses her full on the mouth, despite her frenzied attempts to pull away. By mid-1929 the studio had decided to solidify a lasting relationship for Mickey and Minnie — it was first made evident in *The Karnival Kid*, in which the formerly aggressive Mickey is suddenly shy and dumbstruck around his female counterpart. The trend continued in *Wild Waves* (1929), when the Mouse actually has some dramatic moments trying to revive the unconscious Minnie. This is not to say that all elements of Mickey had been toned down — in *Karnival Kid*, he also has the nerve to insult and to jump up and down on rival sideshow barker

Mickey's career is about to take off in *Plane Crazy*.
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy Pam Martin)

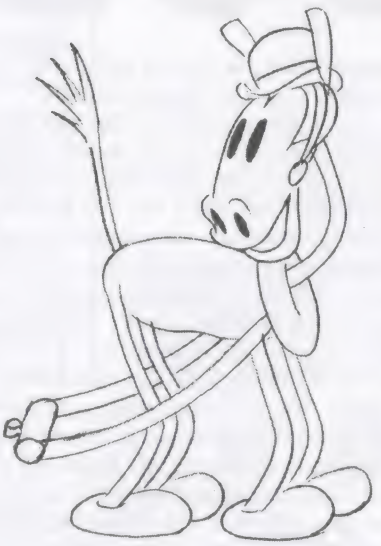
Kat Nipp.

The weaker cartoons of this period may not have been evident as such in their initial release, but clearly stick out today. *The Plowboy* simply meanders about: scenes lead into one another, but no one plot is clearly sustained throughout the film. *The Karnival Kid* tells two barely-related stories separated by a blackout; the second story, taking place at night, was originally printed on blue film stock in what was then considered a fancy special effect, but it fails to wash today and leaves the cartoon disjointed. The clumsiness of such early efforts disappeared after 1929.

Mickey's 1928-29 cartoons featured some supporting characters, but few of them went on to lasting fame. Wienie the Dachshund, who also appeared in the newspaper-strip stories "Lost on a Desert Island" and "Mr. Slicker and the Egg Robbers," appeared in *Plane Crazy* and *Mickey's Choo-Choo* (as well as having brief roles in a few later films), but had no real personality — just extreme malleability. Patricia Pigg sang a hilarious aria in *Mickey's Follies* and danced up a storm in both *The Shindig* (1930) and *The Whoopee Party* (1932, reusing *Shindig* animation), but after just these few major animated roles she was consigned to minor comic-strip appearances only. Raffish feline Kat Nipp had cameo parts in two films and a larger role in *The Karnival Kid*; aside from a single 1931 Gottfredson strip story, he was not to appear again. Only Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar were to rise to fairly minor stardom.

Of the 1928-29 cartoons, the real "must-sees" — aside from the deservedly well-known initial trio of *Plane Crazy, Gallopin' Gaucho* and *Steamboat Willie* — are *The Opry House* (a hilarious musicale in which Mickey, seen in his gloves for the first time, goes in drag as a harem girl), *Mickey's Follies, Mickey's Choo-Choo* (the first time Disney himself did extensive voice work for Mickey), and *The Barnyard Battle* (in which Mickey defends his farm from attack during World War I). These early cartoons feature the mischievous early Mickey at his apex.

Mickey appeared in two promotional films in 1929. Both were for the Mickey Mouse Clubs: no relation to the later television show, these were kids' clubs sponsored by, and convening in, theatres, which the Disney Studio organized in Mickey's early years. The first film, *Minnie's Yoo-Hoo*, contained animation of Mickey and his ragtime band reworked from *Mickey's Follies*. The animation is repeated so that Mickey sings the chorus of the title song



This drawing from *The Plowboy* shows the loose cartoony style of the early Disney shorts.
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy Pam Martin)

twice. While Walt Disney dubs Mickey's more familiar voice over the first chorus (in which Carl Stalling originally did the singing), Stalling's voice — in an even deeper baritone than that of Mickey's Follies — still sings it the second time! The second Mickey Mouse Club film is the most obscure Disney sound cartoon ever made. Combining live action and animation to pair Mickey and Minnie with vaudeville star "Noodles" Fagan, no prints of the film have been discovered by historians as of this writing. If you have any knowledge of this film's whereabouts, we would be interested to know.

(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy Pam Martin)

1930: A Broadening of Ideas

The Disney-Iwerks team dissolved early in 1930 when Ub left to open his own studio and produce the superb but short-lived *Flip the Frog* series. At this point Disney himself reduced his involvement with the cartoons and Burt Gillett became the series' usual director for a time. Gillett had his own way of drawing Mickey: the character's ears, gloves and shoes were enlarged, his eyes became rounder, and his snout was slightly shortened. While Iwerks had treated the Mouse as a grotesque figure in the manner of Wilhelm Busch's creations, replete with large teeth and prominent gums when his mouth opened, Gillett went for the stuffed animal approach, making Mickey a more cuddlable character. However, Gillett's team were not the animators that Iwerks was: for a brief time, the character animation went through a distinct drop in quality. By early 1931, however, the crisis was basically over.

Mickey's personality went through a distinct change with the Disney/Iwerks team away from the picture. While still mischievous and boisterously cheerful, the Mouse lost some of the extreme obnoxia that characterized his first appearances on the screen; he also spent less time tormenting other animals in the barnyard. The types of films that were being made also changed: with the novelty of sound dying down, the films went from 1929's format — in which all but one of the cartoons were completely musical — to a new mixture of elements which relied more on adventure. Just as Mickey's comic strip moved in 1930 from a gag-ruled semi-story ("Lost on a Desert Island") to more dramatic fare ("In Death Valley"), the cartoons made a similar switch.

The "new-style" entries of 1930 included *The Fire Fighters, The Cactus Kid, The Gorilla Mystery, The Chain Gang,* and *Pioneer Days*, none of which was without a musical sequence, but none in which that was the main segment of the cartoon. With the series still feeling its way, the musical segments sometimes seemed too long or out of place —

most notably in *The Chain Gang*. Nonetheless, the quality was improving.

The Chain Gang also marked another important development. The cartoon casts Mickey as a convict breaking out of jail. As he flees through a swamp, jail guard Pete lets two bloodhounds loose after our hero. The bloodhounds look awfully familiar to the modern eye, and it is hardly surprising; when the identical design was reused for a single mutt two months later in *The Picnic* (1930), Pluto was born. The animators were unsure at first exactly how to handle the new star: while his creator Norm Ferguson drew Pluto looking much as he would for years to come, others drew him in varying sizes (sometimes in different scenes of the same film) and postures (in one scene of *The Picnic*, he stands on his hind legs) at first. In some early appearances, he even spoke a word or two. Yet a star was undoubtedly in the making.

It is hard to say exactly what impact Pluto had on the Mickey Mouse series. When he "shared" the gags with Mickey, as in 1932's *The Duck Hunt*, Pluto was an engaging presence; yet when given solo material within the cartoon, Pluto got an even larger audience response. As a result, by the late 1930s, many Mickey cartoons were his in name only, the action dominated by Pluto — with the storymen making deliberate attempts to get Mickey out of the way, sometimes unconvincingly (as when in 1939's *Society Dog Show* he spends much of the film looking around under a hassock). I do not mean to state that Pluto was an inferior character who did not deserve his popularity: only that when misused, he wrongly usurped Mickey's cartoons. In the early 1930s, however, this was still very much in the future.

Horace Horsecollar, Clarabelle Cow, and Peg-Leg Pete all continued to appear during 1930. In *The Barnyard Concert* Clarabelle stood on her hind legs for the first time, gaining a skirt later in the year for *The Shindig* (which she at first wore only over her udder like an ersatz brassiere). Horace, meanwhile, evolved from four-footed horse (*The Cactus Kid*) to humanoid equine — switching back and forth from four-footed to two-footed poses in *The Fire Fighters*. The golden age for Horace and Clarabelle, however, was yet to come. Pete turned in a truly great performance in *The Cactus Kid* , particularly when dancing to Offenbach's Can-Can, but his star had not yet risen, either. A minor villain also appeared for the first time in 1930: Beppo the Gorilla of *The Gorilla Mystery*, though possessing few very distinctive attributes other than drooling ferociousness, was to appear in three other films in the next few years. Beppo was undoubtedly the inspiration for the Gottfredson gorilla Spooks, a more sympathetic (if also bad-tempered) simian. Beppo himself also put in a single appearance, under the nom-de-plume Growlio, in a Gottfredson adventure: the 1935 story "Hoppy the Kangaroo".

Character studies from *The Cactus Kid*
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

1931: An Early Plateau

1931 saw a fantastic improvement in the quality of the Mickey Mouse series. It is difficult to say exactly why, but the rather slow pacing and occasionally awkward animation of most 1930 entries now vanished. Perhaps the staff had simply finally gotten over Iwerks' departure. This is not to say that the cartoons boasted unusual finesse — the artwork is still not particularly polished, and the characters are not as streamlined as they later were — but Disney's crew had weathered the post-Iwerks storm.

Mickey's episodes in 1931 boasted very few outright adventures a la *The Chain Gang*, but the films were not 1929-style straight musicales either. Most stories this year began by setting up a simple, undramatic story, dropping in a musical number, then building to a climax in a remarkably orchestrated way. One of the finest examples is *Traffic Troubles*, in which the plot can actually be described in six distinct stages:

1) Introduction of situation (Mickey as taxi driver in crowded city).
2) Comic interlude (giving a ride to Percy Pig, conflict with policeman and obnoxious motorist).
3) Musical sequence (Mickey gives Minnie a ride to her music lesson).
4) Comic interlude (attempts to repair a flat tire), building to
5) Climax (snake oil salesman fills car with snake oil, and it runs amuck, sending Mickey and Minnie on a wild ride).
6) Denouement (Mickey and Minnie bail out of car to end up in barnyard).

Many other 1931 entries featured similar organization. *Mickey Steps Out* follows Mickey's preparation for, and commencement of, a musical visit at Minnie's home, only to be disrupted by a wild chase between Pluto and a cat. *The Castaway* shows Mickey marooned on an island enjoying gaggery and a musicale with local fauna; its climax occurs with a wild and effective chase involving a lion and crocodile. *The Beach Party, The Barnyard Broadcast, The Moose Hunt* and many others follow similar schemes. It is only when the six-step formula is disrupted that the cartoons derail: *Mickey Cuts Up* features an overly slow musical sequence, leaving such little room for plot that the climax seems sudden and unwarranted when it occurs. *Fishin' Around* consists of a long, unstructured series of gags; while humorous, the gags are rather slow such that the climax, when it suddenly arrives, is once again rather jarring.

Mickey's supporting players grew in prominence in 1931. Pluto made many appearances, never stealing the show but contributing his own, distinctive brand of gaggery. He

Mickey's about to elude a tackle in *Touchdown Mickey*
(© Walt Disney Productions; Courtesy of Pam Martin /CEL-EBRATION!)

continued to stand on his hind legs now and then, as in *Blue Rhythm*, and had two speaking roles within 1931; after that, however, his mute four-legged status was determined for good. Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar had fine scenes in numerous films. Horace took turns as a diver (*The Beach Party*) and musical saw player (*The Barnyard Broadcast*), while Clarabelle was at her best as swimmer (*The Beach Party*) and ragtime dancer (*The Birthday Party*).

Mickey's personality continued to develop through 1931. With no straight adventure cartoons made during the year, Mickey's dramatic roles were nonexistent. As a result, his boyish prankster side is more evident. While not generally as malicious as in the 1929 entries, Mickey is still lovably uninhibited and easy to identify with: exactly as he acts in the contemporary Gottfredson strip. This is not to say Mickey has completely forsaken his mean streak, but that when it does crop up, it seems less appropriate.

A notable example is the scene in *Traffic Troubles* wherein he repairs a flat tire by grabbing a passing pig, forcing a hose into its mouth and the other end into the tire, then jumping up and down on the howling, bloated boar until the tire is filled. It was exactly such uncouth gaggery that convinced a censors' board of the day to demand that the Disney Studio rehabilitate the Mouse. "Mickey is not to drink, smoke, or tease the stock in the barnyard," the Motion Picture Herald commented when a censors' delegation had had its say. "Mickey has been spanked... [and] doing what everyone approves [means doing] very little of anything." Luckily, this ruling came after 1930's more adventurous cartoons had already de-emphasized much of Mickey's lower humor, so the natural course of events was not altered very much. We were left with Mickey in perhaps his most enjoyable incarnation, one who didn't punch, tweak, and kick as often as before, but who was no less delightful. As the Mouse himself said through Floyd Gottfredson in a 1932 Sunday comic page: "Why should I use my arms an' legs, when I've got brains?"

1932: The Golden Age Begins

Superb as many of the earlier Mouse cartoons were, it was in 1932 that the studio's animation quality took a step up and a bold process of increased experimentation became the norm. Mickey and other characters were slightly streamlined — Mickey losing his eyebrows and shoe-soles in all but the closest shots, for instance — with the result that animation became plainly easier and more enjoyable for Disney's artists. This is not to say that corners were cut: instead, the time saved on animation of a cartoon's central
figures was displaced onto production of atmospheric elements for each cartoon. The new motto seems, from observation of the year's films, to have been "bigger is better." Animators seemed to throw themselves into cartoons that featured huge crowds of characters. *Mickey's Nightmare* depicts a horde of young mice descending on — and nearly destroying — Mickey's home. The Mad Dog whisks a soap-swallowing Pluto into the center of town, where his sudsy expectorations lead him to be pursued by a mob, and gives Mickey the opportunity to cry his heart out before dozens of onlookers and vicious dogcatcher Dan.

Barnyard Olympics sends Mickey through a wild pentathlon with not only Pete but eight other competitors to deal with. Even the purely musical films reflected the animated population explosion: The *Whoopee Party* involved such wild, dance-mad bedlam among its participants that, by comparison, the previous year's *Birthday Party* looked sedate.

For the first time in two years, tales of adventure were again a studio mainstay, but with the new emphasis on anything-goes action, detail, and exaggeration, they somehow felt better than ever before. *Mickey in Arabia* saw Sultan Pete and his mob of thugs attempt to add Minnie to the local harem. Gags of a less realistically-plausible sort — for example, Mickey running up a "ladder" created when flying swords miss him and stick into the wall in a row — were put over by the sheer speed and exuberance of the film, exactly the technique later pioneered by many Warner Brothers directors. *The Klondike Kid* spoofed Chaplin's leaning-cabin sequence of *The Gold Rush* (1925) in its conclusion, in which Mickey and Pete duelled inside Pete's shack as the building swayed wildly about. Yet enough new elements — the cabin sliding down a hill collecting trees on the way, for example — were added that the parody developed into something completely original. In short, the Disney studio had developed a unique stylistic stamp for its material, one which impressed upon concepts that directors and animators brought into the films from other sources.

As a character, Mickey remained basically the same as he had been in 1931. In some cartoons, *The Grocery Boy*, *The Whoopee Party* , his exuberance seems more manic, but it is mainly the pace and timing of the cartoons that give it that feeling. Perhaps the one major advancement came at the end of the year, when in *Mickey's Good Deed* the studio attempted to craft a genuine tearjerker. The cartoon — in which street musician Mickey sells Pluto to a rich family so to buy a Christmas surprise for youngsters even poorer than himself; is remarkable, particularly for its time, in the amount of genuine empathy it creates for its characters. While humorous in his overblown enthusiasm, Mickey is nonetheless completely believable when he quietly cries to himself; Pluto is shown with more depth than before, even as we are permitted to laugh at his terror-stricken antics in the aristocratic household. As a testament to how important this cartoon is to Disney even today, we need only note that it is the only black-and-white Mickey cartoon to have been available on an American VHS video tape since 1988.

Horace and Clarabelle continued to appear throughout 1932. Despite their prominence in the Gottfredson strip of the time, however, they had little important business in the year's films: Clarabelle's receipt of a rather rude trick in *The Whoopee Party* (as detailed below) was the most notable sequence. As mentioned, Pegleg Pete had some fine moments. Disney's final early instance of plagiarizing others occurred when *The Mad Dog*

included a Chinese laundryman with a strong resemblance to George Herriman's Mock Duck (from "Krazy Kat"). But more important by far, another major character was added to the Disney stock company in 1932: at first going by the name Dippy Dog (or Dawg, as it was spelled after mid-1933), this canine bumpkin would later evolve into the beloved Goofy. At first he had traits which would later disappear almost entirely: in *The Whoopee Party* and *Touchdown Mickey*, his laughter is so wild as to suggest insanity, and in the former film he exhibits an unparalleled audacity by tickling Clarabelle Cow in her nether regions with his unrolling party whistle. It must be noted here that Dippy's appearances in films of the period, while relatively frequent, are nonetheless not as major or lengthy as some previous texts have suggested until now. His important roles, prior to 1935, are few, so sparse in fact that his voice could be given to other characters (i.e. the cannibal king in 1932's *Trader Mickey*) without seeming unlikely.

Mickey cuts a rug in *The Whoopee Party*.
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

Another innovation was taken in 1932 when the first color Mickey Mouse cartoon was created. *Parade of the Award Nominees* was made especially for the Academy Award ceremony. Lost and forgotten until recently in much the manner of the 1929 "Noodles" Fagan film, its recent rediscovery shows it to be a relatively minor, if beautifully-colored, cartoon. It simply portrays Mickey and his gang leading a single-file row of caricatured actors and actresses nominated for Academy Awards down a cyclical fairy-tale-like background. Perhaps most notable is how different the characters' color schemes are from those that would be chosen fresh in 1935. Pluto remains grey, even in color. The Mice have pink faces, replaced by white in the first two years of later color cartoons, while Mickey's shorts are green (as they often were in merchandise of the time).

Various Mickey cartoons of 1932 were adapted in part within the comic strip. *The Klondike Kid* became part of Gottfredson's "The Great Orphanage Robbery," while Trader Mickey's hungry cannibals teamed up with the Mouse against pirates in Gottfredson's "Mickey Mouse Sails for Treasure Island". *Mickey in Arabia* supplied plot elements which would become the comic adventure "The Sacred Jewel," although not until late 1933. Mickey got a Sunday color strip for the first time in 1932, and during the year it contained gags which included elements directly drawn from *The Mad Dog, The Grocery Boy,* and *Musical Farmer.*

It was in 1932 that Disney began sponsoring art courses for his animators, presumably financed by his growing budget. The budget also financed other technical advancements, such as the possibility of refilming unsatisfactory scenes in a finished cartoon. A pre-release print of *The Whoopee Party* exists in the Disney vaults: it is complete with main titles, finished in every way, but the released version includes partial restaging and redubbing of scenes with Clarabelle and Minnie, and shows a rug on the floor below a troupe of dancers where no rug appears in the variant version.

1933:Mickey's Mellerdrammer(s)

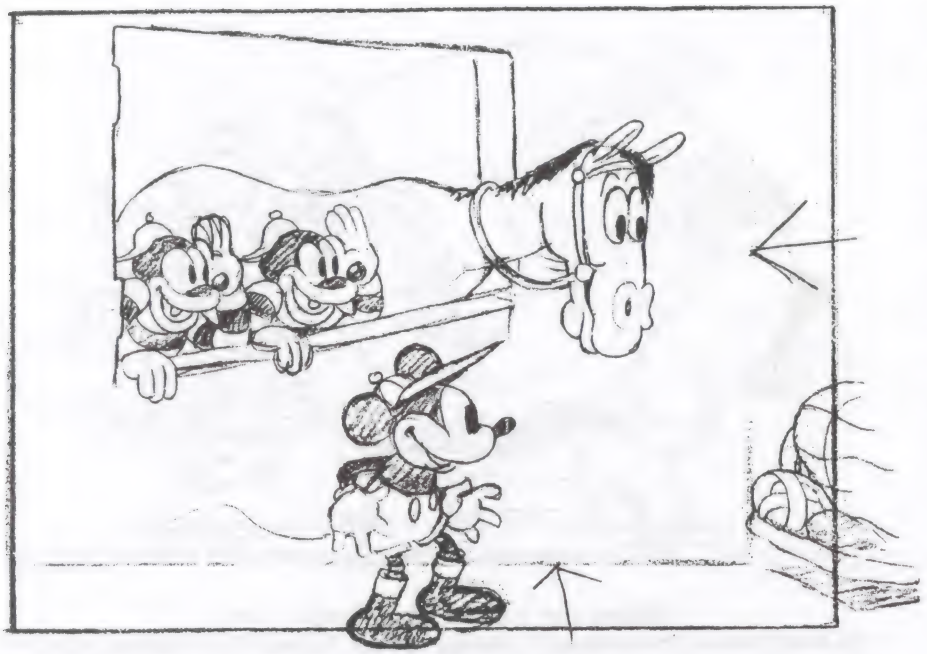
Having plowed their way vibrantly through a fine 1932, the Disney studio embarked in 1933 on a group of cartoons which continued into the next year and that have often been considered the "classic" black-and-white Mickey cartoons: among them *Building a Building, The Mail Pilot,* and *Ye Olden Days*, these tended to feature artwork, music, and atmosphere that was more uninhibited and magnificent than ever before. Yet, in other ways, they were more restricted than before.

In *Building a Building* Mickey rescues Minnie from Pete on a construction site. In *The Mail Pilot* , Mickey duels with Pete in the stratosphere, and in *Shanghaied* (1934) it's pirate Pete whom the Mouse must contend with. *The Pet Store* doesn't involve Pete, but features Beppo the Gorilla once again in a Pete-like role that brings out the same aspects of Mickey's character.

Mickey's Gala Premiere (1933), a star-studded epic set at Grauman's Chinese Theatre, specifically parodies Mickey's 'typical' plot conventions within the film Mickey is presenting, and the plot chosen to mock is a melodrama with Pete as villain. In short, Pete was making more appearances in the shorts than ever before, and as great as those cartoons are, the one-legged feline's continued presence meant that Mickey became less interesting than before. Forced into the role of "hero" as it was interpreted in 1890s melodramas, Mickey begins to feel like more of a goody-goody than was the case up to now. That's why, to this author at least, Mickey's finest (or, at least, most critically interesting) frolics of 1933 are hardly those with Pete in them.

The year, after all, did witness the release of such classics as *The Steeple Chase*, in which Mickey saves Colonel Rolfe's "bottom dollar" by riding to victory on stable hands dressed in a horse suit; *Mickey's Mellerdrammer*, in which Mickey, Minnie, Horace, Clarabelle, and Dippy put on Uncle Tom's Cabin and bring the theatre down around their knees; *Giantland*, in which "Jack" Mouse faces down Giant Rumplewatt at the top of a beanstalk; and perhaps best of all, Ye Olden Days, a spectacular medieval romance in which Dippy comes to the fore for the first time... as villain, as this is ostensibly a stage drama. It's interesting to note that a considerable number of Mickey's later black-and-white cartoons were fictional stories that he acted in, not "real" events in his "life"; dramas, if not straight melodrama. It is at this point that Mickey's consistent "life," as depicted both in the comics and on screen, takes second place to his status as an actor in roles.

At this point Mickey's roles are designed to show off his natural personality, so all is well. But later this consistency was less important. *Giantland* is a fine example. Mickey, correctly characterized, would never be dumb



A politically incorrect layout drawing from *The Steeple Chase*.
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

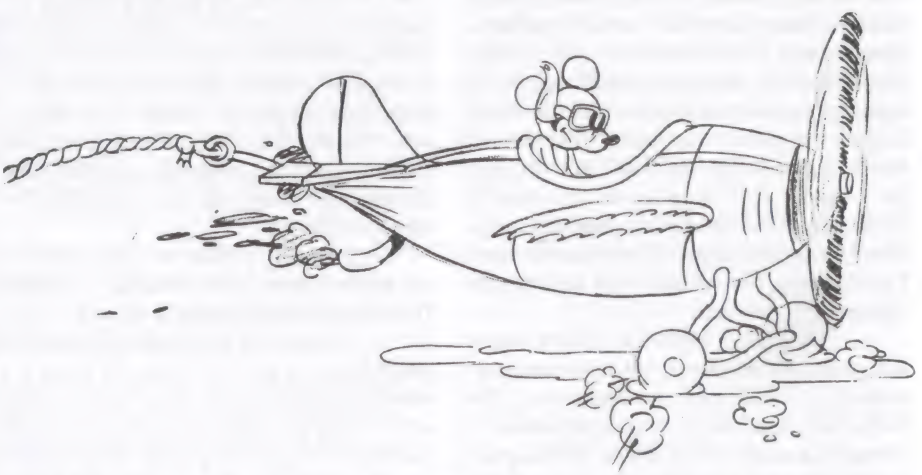
enough to be swindled into buying magic beans, so the story — told by Mickey to a crowd of orphan mice — simply skips that point, beginning with Mickey simply discovering the beanstalk. Various elements of the tale are mocked, as Mickey gives Rumplewatt a fit with a noseful of pepper, so we see that while this is a beautiful, rich story, it is also supposed to seem lovingly exaggerated by auteur Mickey. By constrast, years later in 1947's *Mickey and the Beanstalk*, the tale not only begins with Mickey somehow trading the cow for magic beans (a move more suited to Goofy) but presents a magic valley ruled by a gorgeous singing harp without any type of tongue-in-cheek flavor. For this author, at least, *Mickey and the Beanstalk* is a film that just happens to involve Mickey Mouse, while *Giantland* is "Jack and the Beanstalk" as Mickey himself would imagine it were he to exist. In 1933, even as Mickey's character became more typecast, it still had the type of spark and spunk that made it work.

Horace and Clarabelle continued to appear, but in 1933 they only had one significant role. As Eliza in *Mickey's Mellerdrammer*, Clarabelle had her longest speaking role of any cartoon, also securing for good the schoolmarmishly perfect voice which she'd later use again in *Mickey's Fire Brigade* (1935). Playing Simon Legree, the despised and despicable slaveowner, in Mellerdrammer, Horace gets his most extensive speaking role, but the voice isn't the nasal dulcet of *The Barnyard Broadcast* (1931) and *Mickey's Birthday Party* (1942); instead, as he is attempting to sound tough, Horace has been given a voice identical to Pete's, probably provided by Pete's own Billy Bletcher. The only problem is that he sounds too authentic; Horace on-film is clearly struggling to play his part — and sometimes failing, while his voice by contrast is sure of itself and truly villainous. Still, *Mickey's Mellerdrammer* is a fine showcase for Horace.

Minnie's character was altered during 1933. Rather than being the passive heroine she had been for a while, she began to revert to her earlier more fiery personality. It is Minnie who ultimately rescues Mickey (by dumping hot coals down the villain's trousers, no less) in *Building a Building*. When her auto horn drives *Mickey's Mechanical Man* berserk, Minnie remains unusually calm, offering wisecracks in the face of the tumult. Later, when the robot is down for the count in a boxing ring, it is Minnie who saves the day by thinking back to the horn's possibility as energy-restorer (a gag reworked by Bob Clampett in the 1938 *Porky and Daffy*). In *Puppy Love*, Minnie has her first argument with Mickey since 1929, sending him reeling with an aggressive verbal onslaught. Unfortunately, Minnie would only remain an important character in the series for another year.

In a sign of what was to come, Pluto also became more prominent during 1933. Attaining a physical appearance which was not to change until 1946 (and then, only slightly), the bloodhound co-starred in *Puppy Love* and *The Mad Doctor*. Pluto wrested the spotlight completely away from his master in *Mickey's Pal Pluto*, in which his rivalry with kittens led to an onscreen battle between his two conflicting instincts (depicted as angelic and demonic versions of himself). Notably, what with this new prominence for Pluto, this last film portrayed Mickey quite casually as an everyday homeowner, the average mouse next door. Although it's clear that story men didn't think anything of it at the time, it was Mickey's first completely uninteresting role. As time passed, it would grow in prominence until it became, years later, his only role.

Most of 1933's cartoons were related to contemporary comic adventures. *Mickey's Mellerdrammer* was actually inspired by the early 1932 comic strip "The Great Orphanage Robbery." *The Mail Pilot* spawned an epic comic battle between Mickey and Sylvester Shyster which would introduce Captain Doberman. *Mickey's Mechanical Man* provided a plot that, when combined with that of a later cartoon, would become Gottfredson's "Hoppy the Kangaroo." Giantland became the comic "Rumplewatt the Giant," while *Puppy Love* went the opposite route, drawing inspiration from a 1932 Sunday strip. *The Mad Doctor*, in production late the previous year, led to "Blaggard Castle," one of Floyd Gottfredson's most famous tales. While the comic maintained the film's atmosphere, the single Doctor Triplex of the film turned from human to orangutan



(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

By 1933, Mickey Mouse was as big an attraction to motion picture audiences as the performers caricatured in *Mickey's Gala Premiere*. (© Walt Disney Productions, Courtesy Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

and was joined by his two equally insane brothers, Ecks and Doublex. Horace had perhaps his finest hour in the story. As a crowning touch, "Blaggard Castle"'s recent popularity since a 1988 reprint has led to Ecks, Doublex, and Triplex being revived by the Disney Studios for use in new comics and paraphernalia. The influence of *The Mad Doctor* is thus felt even now.

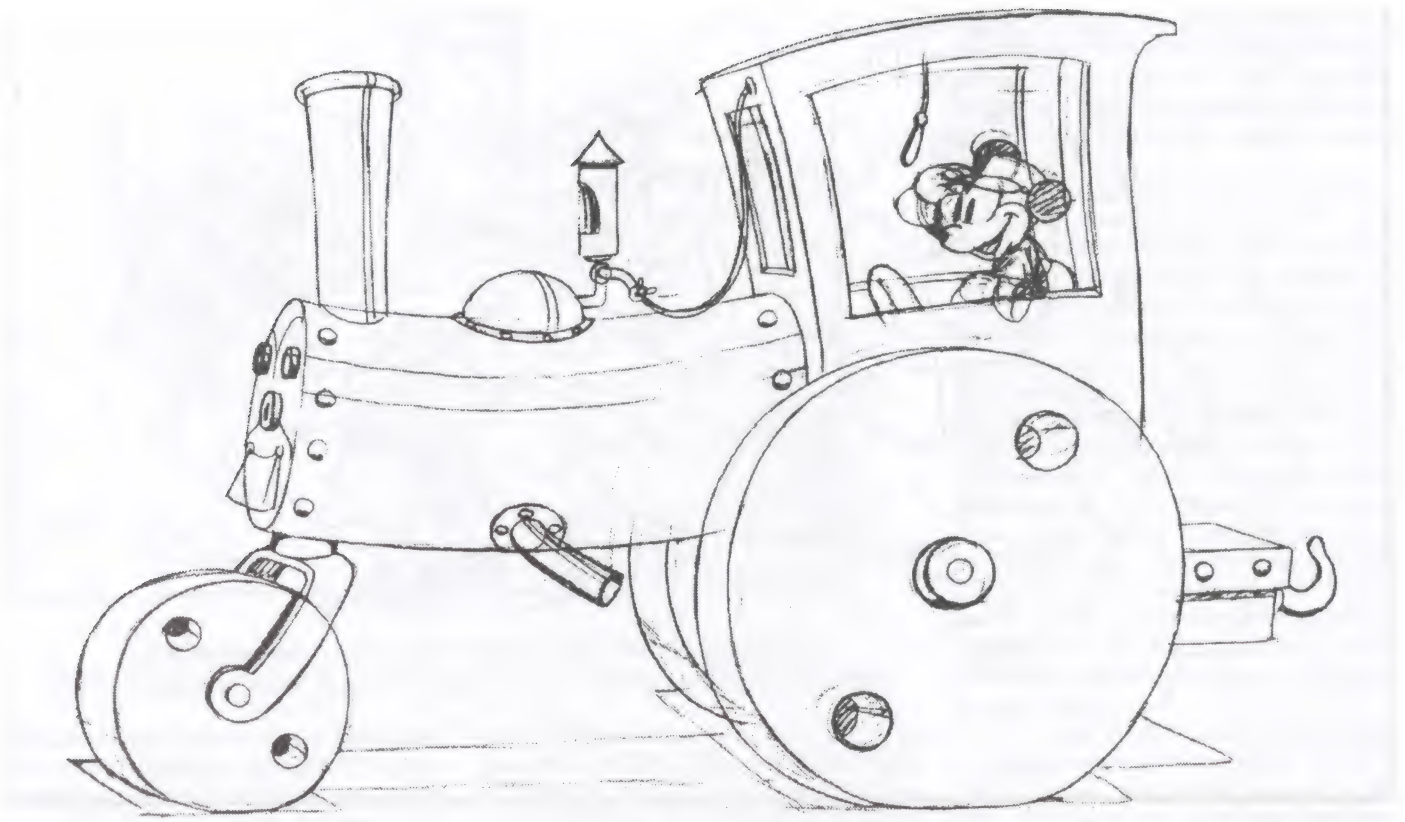
1934: From Hero to Straight Man

As has been stated, 1933 was a year where Mickey's character began to be more restricted, as he was placed in more melodrama-style hero roles and fewer roles that showcased his wittiness, pranks, and love of jazz. Unfortunately, as time went by the studio's directors increasingly took the hero role to be the only suitable one for the Mouse, even as they acknowledged its limitations. "To the storymen," Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston have explained, this role for Mickey "seemed too bland, with little possibility for humor." Yet bland or not, this was the role that these same storymen themselves chose to emphasize. They dealt with the resulting simplicity in Mickey's character by simply assigning Mickey secondary status in his own cartoons. The present author wishes not to say that other characters shouldn't have had important roles: simply that they shouldn't have been given them at the title character's expense. Yet they were.

Mickey Plays Papa was an example of what was happening. The film starts off with a majestically gothic nighttime view of Mickey's town. We settle into Mickey's home, where he's reading a murder novel in bed. Mickey's reading of the laughably cliched potboiler is interrupted when a child's scream erupts from the hallway. After sneaking down the hallway (and — in a scene currently scissored on television — having a few minor mishaps with the shotgun he's brought along for security), Mickey discovers that the howls have come from Elmer, an abandoned infant left in a basket on his doorstep. Mickey brings out a few toys for Elmer to play with, then goes to the kitchen to get him a bottle of milk — and disappears. The next six minutes consist mainly of Pluto's encounters with the toys Mickey has gathered for the tot. Funny as the sequence may be, its length causes the film to slow up and is a prime example of how dispensable Mickey was suddenly considered to be.

This type of Mouse-neglect, as it may humorously be termed, was even more obvious in Orphans' Benefit, released a few months later. The vaudeville format used here was nothing new to Mickey cartoons, but here Mickey only exists to introduce each act. He does get to play the piano along with Clara Cluck's operatic solo — a role that gives him a few moments of comedy — but he is basically the
least comic and least interesting of the characters in the film.
Another one of those characters, for the first time in a Mouse
production, was Donald Duck. The obstreperous duck, gifted with blind rages that no other cartoon character could then lay claim to, is truly a fine cartoon "actor" and could have been an excellent foil for Mickey. Some writers have explicitly referred to him as one. But a foil exists to bring out opposition from another character. The suddenly sedate Mickey of *Orphans' Benefit* (and many later cartoons) never gives Donald any opposition; he laughs like a nice guy and leaves the (real or figurative) stage. Donald wasn't brought into the Mickey cartoons in 1934 to give Mickey a foil, but, it would seem, to find a new character to base cartoons around. The storymen were successful.

This is not to say that Mickey was



A strong pencil from *Mickey's Steamroller*
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

wholly uninteresting in every 1934 cartoon, or that earlier supporting characters were suddenly neglected. *Shanghaied*, *Two-Gun Mickey* and especially *Gulliver Mickey* (an intricate, Swiftian tall tale narrated by Mickey himself) did give Mickey some great exposure on his own, although for the first time there was a remarkable contrast between these cartoons' Mickey and that of the year's other films. Horace and Clarabelle co-starred in both *Camping Out* and *Orphans' Benefit*, and both cartoons, particularly the latter, contained some great moments for them. Goofy made only one appearance, in *Orphans' Benefit*, but it too counts as a fine moment for him. Pluto had a lot of great scenes — with Mickey, a tradition sadly ignored later on — in the aptly titled Playful Pluto, wherein Norm Ferguson's famous scene of the dog wrestling with flypaper was first used. (It later appeared again in the 1939 Donald Duck cartoon *Beach Picnic*.) Mickey's nephews Morty and Ferdie, created for comics in 1932, appeared in, and dominated, *Mickey's Steamroller*, which would be their only animated appearance. It's hard to know why they didn't appear on film again.

Once again there were links between the cartoons and contemporary Gottfredson comics. *Shanghaied*, a pirate adventure with great high-seas flavor, inspired "The Captive Castaways," while Camping Out shared its setting with the wilderness tale of "Dr. Oofgay's Secret Serum." Costumes and atmosphere of *Two-Gun Mickey* were much like those in the strip story "The Bat Bandit of Inferno Gulch," although that story's title villain was a change from the less intelligent Pete (who starred in the cartoon). Strangely, the Sunday page chose not to adapt *Gulliver Mickey*, a rather unfortunate oversight.

1935 and After: Sharing Screen Time

The year in which Mickey gained color also saw a turn away from the Mouse immortalized by Gottfredson. Although a hint of what was to come occurred in *The Band Concert* — when Donald officially usurped Mickey's early mischief-making role and theme song of "Turkey in the Straw" — that film, in which Mickey for once interacted well with Donald, wasn't the best example of what was happening to Mickey as a character. The change was most evident in the final trio of black-and-white releases.

Mickey's Man Friday, an adventure with natives on a desolate island, could have been a great cartoon, if sadly prejudiced in the style of its time; indeed, it does feature magnificent pacing, beautiful animation, and some excellent gags. But here is where we begin to see the boring Mickey who failed to stand up to Donald come to the fore in adventures as well. The best Mickey cartoons give him a cheerfully gutsy attitude fired by buoyant enthusiasm; but *Mickey's Man Friday* features a Mouse who spends almost all his time grinning with very little wit or humor behind a general cheerfulness; it is like finding a jack-o-lantern, not a full, solid pumpkin, in your field. Mickey acts his way through things he might easily have done in any other cartoon (scaring away some of the villains with a phony voodoo mask, for instance), but the gags, without wisecracks or little flairs of creativity on Mickey's part attached to them, don't work as well as they could. Although there were exceptions (the famous *Brave Little Tailor* (1938) and *Thru the Mirror* (1936) among them), most later cartoons that attempted to give Mickey interesting things to do would suffer from the same problem.

Mickey's Service Station features a more interesting version of Mickey, but the

cartoon isn't fully his: it belongs to a trio of stars. Donald and Goofy occupy two thirds of it, and instead of interacting with Mickey, do their bits of business by themselves.

This cartoon was the dry-run for numerous others in which the trio starred as moose hunters, ghostbusters, clock painters, and worked in other trades. They feature a generally determined Mickey who is often enjoyable to watch; they include some of the finest of all Disney animation and some of the best timing, music, and gags that ever appeared in cartoons. They are bona-fide classics. But

significantly, and most unlike Gottfredson's world which centered on Mickey, the films no longer belong to one character. It doesn't sound bad until you realize that by early 1937 Donald and Pluto had their own solo cartoons in which they didn't have to share screen time with anyone. There is no denying that the films spawned by *Mickey's Service Station* were in many cases great, but they weren't the best showcase for Mickey.

The final black-and-white Mickey, *Mickey's Kangaroo*, continued the use of Pluto as main character. Although Mickey had a few enjoyable scenes with Hoppy (the kangaroo), Pluto dominated the film, and while he was on-screen, Mickey was mostly off, just as in *Mickey Plays Papa*. This was to be the trend in nearly every other Mickey/Pluto cartoon from then on: *Mickey's Elephant* (1937), *Mickey's Parrot* (1938), *A Gentleman's Gentleman* (1941), *R'coon Dawg* (1952) — the examples go on and on. The cheerful cameraderie of Mickey's earlier cartoons with Pluto was almost always sacrificed; Pluto wa seldom used to build up or enhance Mickey; the most notable exceptions — *The Pointer* (1939) and *Mr. Mouse Takes a Trip* (1940) — are reknowned today, showing the fine results when Mickey and Pluto were teamed to best advantage.

Mickey did appear in a few films that were throwbacks to the earlier days. *Mickey's Rival* featured Mortimer, a rich fellow suitor for Minnie who led Mickey a merry battle. *Thru the Mirror* and *The Brave Little Tailor* have already been mentioned, as were the few films that really used Mickey and Pluto as a team. Finally there was one brilliant attempt to bring Mickey's personality back to its early roots. *The Little Whirlwind* (1941) featured a snappy, sarcastic, sneaky, enthusiastic, and thoroughly delightful Mouse who moved in such a unique style that the model is often called the "drunk Mickey" — to identify the broad, sweeping motions the character makes — by animators today. The film was directed by Riley Thompson, who certainly deserves credit for such a bold move; it is right in line with Mickey as he then was depicted in the comic strip. Thompson's other most famous film, *The Nifty Nineties* (1941), was the only Mickey/Minnie musical to be made at all during the forties, a

A pensive moment from *The Brave Little Tailor*.
(© Walt Disney Productions Courtesy Pam Martin)

lone reminder of a classic theme of the past. Yet Thompson only made a few Mickey cartoons, and his version of the character didn't outlive his stay in the Mouse unit. Indeed, although the Thompson Mickey is celebrated today, it was viewed as badly out-of-character by other Disney directors of the time. Thompson's attempts to use Mickey as a solo star hardly qualify as typical entries in the series.

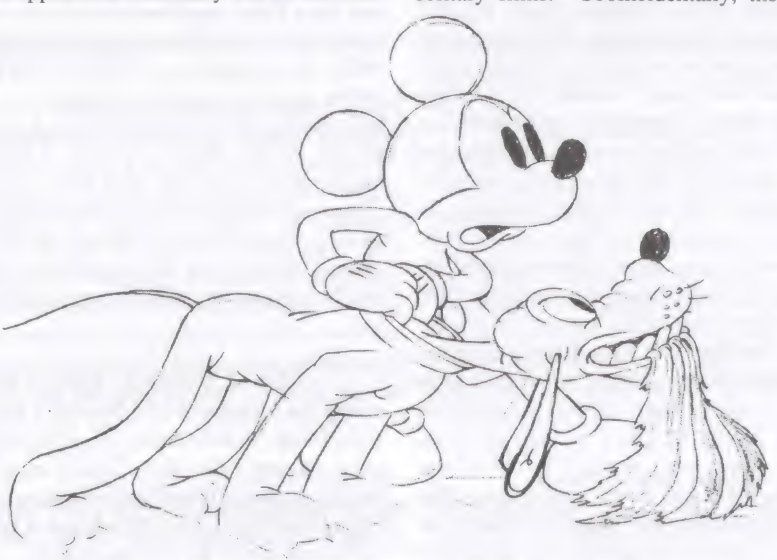
Thus the cartoons were mainly divided up between Mickey/Donald/Goofy and Mickey/Pluto cartoons of the patterns described. Other characters fell into the background. Clara Cluck, the great operatic hen, had been introduced in 1934 as a continuing character, but only was able to make a few appearances given the series' new restrictiveness. Clarabelle Cow had one of her finest performances in *Mickey's Amateurs* (1938), a later stage show in which Mickey stood on the sidelines, but that was her only lengthy performance in the later years. Horace appeared occasionally when it was time to show "the whole gang" congregating for something, but his star had basically fallen to practically glue-factory level.

These cartoons sometimes influenced the Gottfredson strip, but usually in theme only. One can see parallels between *Mickey's Kangaroo* and "Hoppy the Kangaroo" (1935), *Mickey's Man Friday* and "Mickey Mouse Meets Robinson Crusoe" (1938), *Lonesome Ghosts* and "The Seven Ghosts" (1936), *Pluto's Dream House* and "Miracle Master" (1939). The existence of storyboards for an abandoned 1937 cartoon entitled *Mickey's Jungle Express* suggests that other comics, in this case "In Search of Jungle Treasure," may have been inspired by animated projects that never reached the screen.

The Mickey Mouse cartoons made after 1935 are some of the finest animated films made by any studio in their era, at least through about 1942 (after which a two-year expansion of the studio's war effort meant that their least popular series — Mickey's — was dropped for that period). They contain fine, funny gags, breathtaking artwork, excellent and graceful timing, and brilliant music. But most of the time, they don't showcase Mickey the same way that the best comics showcased Mickey, or like solo cartoons with Donald, Goofy, and Pluto were showcases for their own stars. As a result, they hardly merit as much discussion in a text designed to focus on Mickey as a character.

Into the Future

The prominence of the later color cartoons — simply through virtue of their having been made in color — since the 1960s in the United States has meant that kids haven't had the chance to experience Mickey as a vital or interesting animated character aside from a few solitary films. Cooincidentally, the comics



A gripping moment from *Society Dog Show*
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

More hijinks from *The Steeple Chase*
(© Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Pam Martin/CEL-EBRATION!)

available with the character from that point until the advent of Gladstone painted hardly a more intellectually interesting portrait of the Mouse for American youngsters. For these reasons it isn't hard to understand why Mickey's appeal to consumers young and old today rests mainly on a slim, if strong, thread: his potency as an image. His potency as a personality, as essayed in Floyd Gottfredson's comics and the earlier films, was simply untappable.

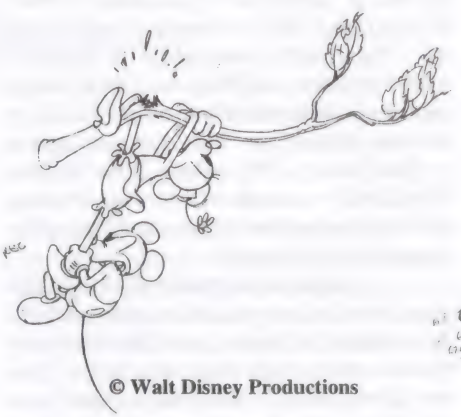
In the last few years there have been attempts to change this situation, but no attempt has been wholly successful. The Disney Channel has aired a larger number of vintage Mickeys since many were computer-colored in 1991, but the shows that include the cartoons are neither at prime viewing times nor shown anywhere but The Disney Channel. In 1993, "The Perils of Mickey" campaign was launched, in which classic Gottfredson stories like *Blaggard Castle* were illustrated on a wide variety of merchandise. Yet the "Perils" campaign did not include any actual reprint of the relevant comics themselves, leaving the uninitiated unable to learn what the shouting was about. 1993 also saw the release of the laserdisc set-*Mickey Mouse: The Black and White Years*, containing 34 vintage cartoons. Yet the boxed set's price and lack of advertising combined to create little demand. Finally, in 1995 a new Mickey short, *Runaway Brain,* was created. The cartoon was excellent, but it was paired with a live-action film that faded quickly from theatre; more recently, its planned re-release was reportedly stymied by a decision that its running time would be better spent showing trailers for other Disney films.

To really revive Mickey Mouse, it would take an effort that relies on maximum availability of both cartoons and comics in all relevant media. Such an effort must take place with the understanding that resultant revenue will take time to grow. Yet if ever a character deserved such an effort, it is Mickey Mouse. To recall a Gottfredson catchphrase: "Well, fer gosh sakes!"

Author's Note:
My thanks and best wishes to everyone who helped to ensure my access to material and inspiration for this project. George Delmerico and Dave Butler supplemented my own animation collection by allowing access to prints from theirs. Scott MacQueen at Disney Film Restoration gave me essential information on the print history of some early films and screened for me the few Mouse cartoons I had been unable to corner earlier. Don Rosa and Harry Fluks both provided Gottfredson material I was lacking. Last, Mattias Hallin put the show on the road by inspiring me to tackle this study in the first place! A tip of the mouse ears to all of you.

David Gerstein, Disney comics writer for Gladstone and Europe's Egmont Publishing, recently edited *Nine Lives to Live*, a collection of 1920s Felix the Cat color comics now available from Fantagraphics Books. He is presently working on a series of articles on Disney shorts for this magazine.

Editor's Note:
We also wish to thank Pam Martin of CEL-EBRATION! for her generosity in providing the illustrations for this article.



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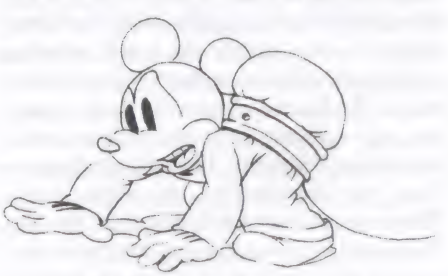
Publisher's Note:
To maintain a certain consistency throughout this article we have used only pencil sketches to compliment David Gerstein's text. Great care was taken to retain the original look and texture of the pencil sketches.



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by G. Michael Dobbs

There are several enduring legends in animation history that contin varying levels of fact. We've all heard how Walt Disney changed the name of his new mouse character to "Mickey" from "Mortimer" because the steady rhythm of a train sounded like "Mickey Mouse" to him. We've all heard people describe *Gertie The Dinosaur* as the first animated cartoon and that Winsor McKay was the screen's first animated cartoonist.

Animation fans have also heard for years that because Max Fleischer's second animated feature, *Mr. Bug Goes To Town* was released on December 7, 1941 that the film was a failure. Fans will also tell you that the film was so bad and poorly received by audiences that it cost Fleischer his studio, his reputation, and his career in animation.

Both of these legends are false. *Mr. Bug* was not released nationally on Dec. 7th, and while the film was a financial wash-out, its failure at the box office was not the sole reason for the demise of the Fleischer Studio.

One wonders then why the second and more polished feature from the Flesicher brothers failed to reach its audience in early Forties, and why the rumors about the film continue to this day. The story behind *Mr. Bug*, is one of a creative roll of the dice combined with the deadliest of corporate intrigue.

Flying High

One would think Max and Dave Fleischer were at the top of world at the end of 1939. Despite mixed reviews, *Gulliver's Travels* had been a major hit for the Fleischer Studio and for its distributor Paramount Pictures. The second full-length sound animated feature had placed within the top 20 money-makers for 1939-40. The film had also been a licensing and merchandising hit as Paramount had hired the same agent who had guided Walt Disney in his initial merchandising efforts. The brothers had made a successful transition to their new Florida studio and production on their short subjects was going well. In the Dec. 6 1939 edition of *Variety* Max Fleischer announced that his studio would begin preparations for a new feature-length cartoon.

But beneath the surface, there was trouble. *Gulliver's Travels* had been originally budgeted for $900,000.00, but came in at approximately $1.5 million. Moving the production from New York to Florida and hiring dozens of new artists to meet the December 1939 release date had put a considerable strain on the studio's resources. Paramount had fronted Fleischer money for the new studio, and apparently despite *GT*'s success the Fleischers were in debt to their distributor.

Their financial status did not put them in the best of bargaining positions with Paramount, and the evidence of that is the increasing interference the Fleischer brothers had to endure from the studio.

For instance, in the Jan. 10, 1940 edition of *Variety* , Paramount execs were depicted as trying to decide what the next Fleischer feature should be, and had reduced the field of subjects for 20 to four. "Getting the right story it is said by Paramount's story department is made difficult by the demands of the company's heads that it not be scary, but have suspense," reported the trade paper.

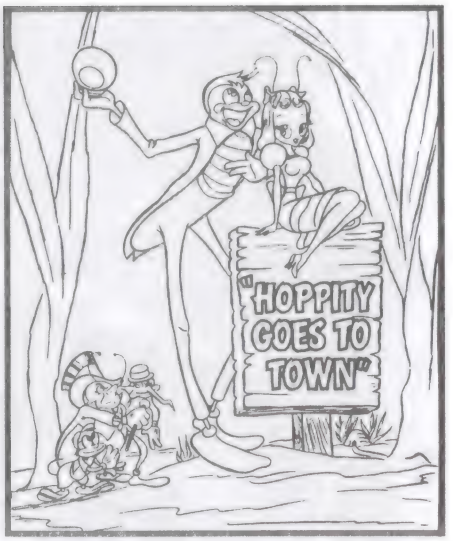
Paramount story editors had apparently not been involved in the decision to select and adapt *Gulliver's Travels* just a few years previous. Now, however, it was clear Paramount would exercise control over such matters. Later in 1940, Paramount flexed its muscle again at the Fleischers when the company purchased the rights to Superman for a series of cartoons without the Fleischers' input.

A New Approach

Gulliver's Travels had been a rushed production, and the Fleischer brothers appeared to have decided to do their second feature differently. By the time their production would be released, the novelty factor of an animated feature would be severely diminished. Walt Disney was releasing *Pinocchio* in February 1940, and would follow that film with *Fantasia* in November of the same year, *The Reluctant Dragon* in June 1941, and *Dumbo* in October of 1941. The second Fleischer animated feature would need to be as polished as possible in order to compete.

Considering the competition from Disney, a new approach was needed for the feature, and the initial step was announced in June of 1940.

That month, Norman Corwin, the acclaimed radio writer and director for CBS,



The alternate title

was signed to a contract to direct the voices for the next Fleischer feature. The announced plan was to use theatrical and radio actors to add the dialogue after the animation was finished. The Fleischer brothers would select actors by listening to audition records made in New York. While the idea of adding the voices after the animation was completed flew in the face of the established Disney productions standards, getting the red-hot Corwin to direct the voices was seen as a coup. Definitely, the Fleischers wanted this film to be very different.

That month also brought the bad news that RKO had bought out Corwin's contract.

Late in November, *Variety* reported that the second Fleischer feature would be based on the fantasy *World in Which We Live* by Karel Çapek. The work had been adapted with considerable liberties by a number of writers which *Variety* reported had included Norwin Corwin. It was announced that Hoagy Carmichel had written songs for the cartoon, and the production would begin to roll at the beginning of the next year.

The announcement that *Mr. Bug*'s screenplay was inspired by a story by Çapek makes for an interesting question; just *what* did inspire the screenplay? Dave Fleischer had said in interviews that the film was based on a story by Maurice Maeterlinck. The duo of Çapek and Maeterlinck is an intellectually heady one. Karel Çapek was renowned for his satiric plays and novels, the most famous being *R.U.R* which had introduced the word "robot" to the language. His science fiction satire War With the Newts was still in print as late as the mid-Seventies.

Maurice Maeterlinck had received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, and his play *The Blue Bird* had been filmed in 1918 and in 1940. He had written an essay in 1901 entitled *The Life of a Bee* which apparently had served as the inspiration of *Mr. Bug*.

Smack the Mosquito and Swat the Fly come into C. Bagley Beetle's "house" to tell him some good news. This still shows off some of the wonderful backgrounds in the film.

Whether or not the influence of either of these highly acclaimed writers had any real impact on the story department at Fleischer's is debatable, the use of their names in publicity releases and interviews certainly did show the alternative path the studio was following. With the exception of *Fantasia*, Disney was safely sticking to well-known, family-oriented pre-sold properties (and certainly *Fantasia* had the insurance of Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra). Taking story ideas from Çapek gave the Fleischer production a different spin from the Disney features.

Of course the authorship of the film is further muddied by the absence of either Maeterlinck's or Çapek's name in the credits. Officially *Mr. Bug*'s screen adaptation was by Dan Gordon, Ted Pierce, Isidore Sparber, William Turner, Carl Meyer, Graham Place, Bob Wickersham, and Cal Howard, and the original story is credited to Dave Fleischer, and Gordon, Pierce and Sparber. *Mr. Bug* was often described as the first animated feature that had an "original" story! Norman Corwin's name is nowhere to be found in the credits, and there was one report that *Mr. Bug* had been based on one of Corwin's radio plays about a talking caterpillar. When I asked Corwin about whether or not his work had been adapted by the studio, he replied he was unaware of it, but would be interested in finding out if it really had been used.

The work began in February of 1941 with a reported 700 artists working on the film with a 10 month production schedule. In light of the work being done on the Superman shorts and a feature that was supposedly based on either one or two distinguished European authors, Dave Fleischer gave a quote to *Variety* which certainly sounded as if the studio that was known for its surreal cartoons and rubber-limbed animated had entered a new era.

"There is absolutely no reason why the animated cartoon can not tell a solidly dramatic story of today just as well as any other medium of the motion picture field," said Dave. "The time has come to move from the era of the 'novelty' to mature basis in the industry. The story is what is important . Naturally in our feature we'll retain droll whimsy whenever a situation calls for it, but we won't strive for cuteness unless the script indicates such treatment."

The new approach was reflected in publicity pictures taken of Dave Fleischer standing among large statues of the lead characters, a Disney touch, while animation directors Myron Waldman and Graham Place did sketches.

In September of 1941, Dave and five other department heads come to Paramount in Hollywood to finish work on Mr. Bug, and *Variety* reported in December that a major department store in Minneapolis had based their whole Christmas window display on *Mr. Bug*. *Mr. Bug* was clearly going to be Paramount's major Christmas release. A trailer featuring Bob Hope introducing the film was shot and full-page color ads were taken in national magazines.

The Axe Falls

The first review was not kind. Mike Wear of *Variety* saw the finished film at a December 4, 1941 trade screening.

"This second feature from the Max Fleischer studio is better than *Gulliver's Travels*, his initial effort. While it looks like a money-maker for the distributor, hitting the finish line with an over-all cost of $600,00.00 or thereabouts, *Mr. Bug* does not loom as a top grosser.

"[The] Picture will be best received in smaller city spots and neighborhood theaters due to its family appeal. Film will take plenty of selling and Paramount already has a sweeping publicity campaign topped by vast syndicate coverage in full swing...Picture contains too many characters with resultant plot divergence...Truly magnificent backgrounds are overshadowed by the silly actions of Mr. Bug et al...Animation is top flight and far ahead of the story idea. Painstaking effort obviously has gone into production...Most apparent flaw results from the numerous colorless voices..."

The film was apparently shelved for more than two months after the trade screening as the *New York Times* didn't review it until Feb 20, 1942. The plans for a holiday release were obviously altered by Paramount at the last minute, therefore destroying any benefit the film was to receive from the advanced advertising and promotion. Did the studio use the poor results of the trade screening to justify delaying release of the film? The evidence seems to point in that direction.

My feeling is that *Mr. Bug* was sacrificed as part of a plan to take over the Fleischer Studio and eliminate Max and Dave Fleischer. Professor Mark Langer of Carlton University in Ottawa has written the most comprehensive look at the Paramount-Fleischer business relations at that time, and it's clear to him that Max was attempting to wrestle control of his studio back from Paramount. A success with *Mr. Bug* would have been of help to him. Paramount made sure the film was not a success.

The mixed reviews of *Gulliver's Travels* hadn't prevented Paramount from vigorously promoting that film, so why should the mixed reviews of *Mr. Bug* influence the company to dump this film?

Mr. Bug was a more modestly budgeted production so the break-even point would have been less than *GT*. *Mr. Bug* had about the same chance as *GT* to make money in international markets as both films were released during World War II.

Why hadn't Paramount pursued a licensed merchandise campaign as the company had with *GT*? The characters from *Mr. Bug* were ideal for toys, but the only aspect of the film that was exploited was its music. Hoagy Carmichael's *The Couple in The Castle* was recorded by a number of big bands and was a hit, but there was little tie-in between the song and the movie.

Some of the many moods of C. Bagley Beetle from one of his model sheets.

With *Mr. Bug* in limbo, Fleischer made an announcement in January of 1942 that for the duration of the war there would be no more feature productions. He cited a lack of imported pigments for paints and aluminum for the acetate recording discs that "created difficulty in completing *Mr. Bug*." It's interesting to note that the shortages apparently didn't hamper the production of short subjects.

When the press did get a look at *Mr. Bug*, the reviews weren't very good. In the *New York Times*, the reviewer wrote "make no mistake about it, Mr. Disney still is the master cartoonist." *Time* noted in a Feb. 23 1942 review "no menace to King Disney, '*Mr. Bug* is a workman-like effort designed for youngsters...Its color and atmosphere are first-rate; it is in good taste and not overdone."

The End of an Era

To make matters worse, at the same time *Mr. Bug* was being produced, the personal relationship between Max and Dave hit a new low. Max was the eldest sibling in his family and he provided jobs for his brothers, Charlie, Joe, Lou and Dave. Lou and Dave became the most important to the organization as they both had a love of show business. Lou worked with staff composer Sammy Timberg on the scoring of the shorts, while Dave, of course, was credited as the director. There was great tension between Max, the eldest and Dave the youngest brother. As early as the late Twenties, Dave reportedly had wanted to strike out on his own. Max's parents, though, wanted the brothers together, and an uneasy alliance continued.

Their personalities could not have been more different. Max was more quiet and dignified. Some people have characterized him as stodgy, but it's difficult to see the man who made himself the butt of so many jokes on film in the silent Inkwell series as a stuffed shirt. Max was more reserved than Dave, who was the type of person who would "go into a nightclub and start directing the orchestra," according to one contemporary reporter.

Mae Questel characterized Dave to this writer as "crude," and believed he was jealous of his older brother. By the late Thirties, the brothers reportedly were barely on speaking terms.

Dave's divorce and subsequent remarriage to a studio employee when the studio moved to Miami embarrassed Max. According to long-time one long-time studio employee, the late Edith Vernick, some churches in the Miami area were calling on a boycott of Fleischer cartoons because of the messy divorce.

The business machinations between the Fleischer Studio and Paramount, his family situation, and the crushing failure of *Mr. Bug* were the last straws for Dave. According to *Variety*, Dave left the studio in April 1942 to head the animation unit at Columbia Pictures.

Max's efforts to gain control failed and Max turned over his studio to Paramount which, ironically, installed three long-time Fleischer employees (including Max's son-in-law) to head the "new" operation dubbed Famous Studios. By June of 1942, the name "Max Fleischer" was ancient history in the film industry.

In the late Fifties, Paramount sold both *Gulliver's Travels* and *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* to National Telefilm Associates, a company which specialized in the distribution of motion pictures to television stations. Paramount had sold many of the Betty Boop shorts

BOY, OH BOY!
HERE'S MUSIC, LAUGHTER
LOVE AND JOY!
SONGS that'll lead the Hit Parade . . . LAUGHS that'll tickle even the staid
LOVE that'll thrill . . . and FUN that'll fill . . .
Your heart with a memory that never will fade.
The people you'll meet you'll remember forever—
HONEY and HOPPITY, whose love none can sever.
C. BAGLEY BEETLE and his two evil spies
and hundreds of others to startle your eyes
HONEY and HOPPITY
SMACK
SWAT
THE BOSS dishes out some orders!
THE RIGHT BRIDE but the wrong bridegroom!
THREE VOLTS electrocute the three "heels."
SONGS
You'll sing 'em . . and swing 'em! Critics say they'll lead the Hit Parade:
"WE BE THE COUPLE IN THE CASTLE"
"BOY, OH BOY"
"KATY DID KATY DIDN'T"
"BEE MY LITTLE BABY BUMBLE BEE"
"I'LL DANCE AT YOUR WEDDING"
"MR. BUG GOES TO TOWN"
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With hundreds of the most lovable characters ever seen on the screen.
A Feature Cartoon
IN TECHNICOLOR!
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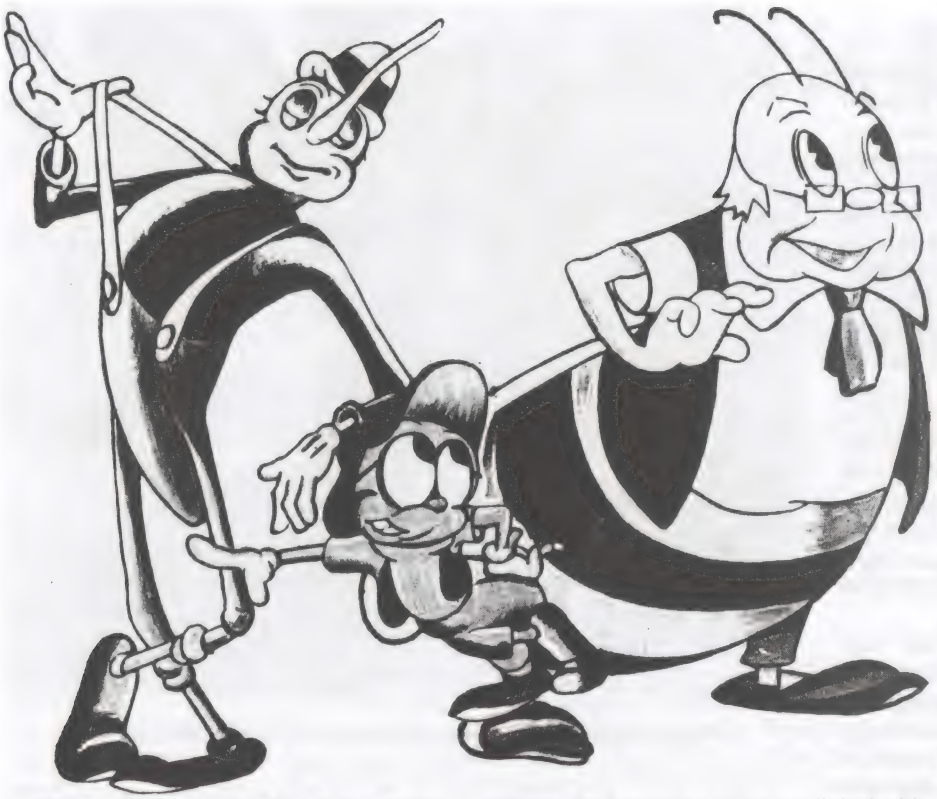
MAX FLEISCHER
Directed by
DAVE FLEISCHER
PLAY THIS LATEST MOVIE GAME
Is slapsilly Bob Hope? Is Nancy Maidenform Carroll? How many of your favorite stars can you find in "Mr. Bug Goes to Town?"



to NTA earlier in the decade and now unburdened themselves of its two animated features. NTA decided to distribute the two films theatrically, rather than simply sell them to television, and in 1959 *Mr. Bug* went back to the nation's theaters now called *Hoppity Goes To Town*. The film turned up during the holiday releasing period and eventually on television.

A Fleischer Cartoon or Not?

With its release on home video and now on laser disc (see Stephen R. Bissette's review in issue 34 of **ANiMATO!**), fans have had the chance of discovering and evaluating the film 50 years after its release.

The Fleischers seemed determined to avoid the classic fairy tale format Disney obviously was pursuing. *Mr. Bug* is very much a product of the America of 1940, and as such carried with it much of the same storytelling baggage as many live-action films from that period.

The story-line of *Mr. Bug* is fairly creaky even for 1940. It's a variation of the classic melodrama. Rich, evil C. Bagley Beetle has his eyes on the lovely young heroine, Honey Bee. When he is about ready to get what he wants, the one person...er..bug..who could stand in his way, Hoppity, unexpectedly returns. Beetle, aided by his two stooges Swat and Smack, attempts to eliminate Hoppity.

Where the film elaborates on the old "curses-foiled-again" plot is the concept of how this insect world co-exists with the human world, and how ultimately the "human ones" on whose property the insects are living are linked with the insects.

The "human ones" are a struggling couple. Dick Dickens is a songwriter who needs a hit to pay the mortgage off on his inherited house. If he doesn't get the money, the bank will foreclose. After an aborted attempt to get the insect town to resettle in the couple's garden, Beetle realizes that if he hides the song royalty check, the couple will leave and Hoppity will be further discredited. When Hoppity learns of the plan, he is sealed into the check's envelope and hidden.

The couple lose their house, and a new building begins construction on the site, a twist not anticipated by Beetle as he's about to marry Honey. When Hoppity escapes, he manages to get the check into the hands of a letter carrier, and he convinces the insect community that they need to climb to the top of the building where Hoppity expects to find a penthouse garden. (He had heard Dick tell Mary of his dream of earning so much money from his song *We're the Couple in the Castle* that they would tear down their old house and build a penthouse on a new "castle.")

Naturally, the song does earn Dick enough money, and, at the conclusion of the film, logic is bent to accommodate a happy ending. By the time the insects manage to make it up to the top, there really is a penthouse and a garden.

Over the years, some critics have stated that *Mr. Bug* is more of a Disney-style film than a Fleischer cartoon, and the look was the product of the influx of west coast animators, some of whom were from the Disney Studios. Furthermore, some people have voiced the opinion that the film fails because it abandoned the Fleischer look and themes. I think a careful viewing of *Mr. Bug* will show that this assertion is baseless.

While the animation and design work is certainly much better than *Gulliver's Travels*, I don't believe artistic evolution should be considered a bad thing. In animation, Disney was hailed because of his studio's ability to improve, while Paul Terry's wretched cartoons were condemned because they never changed.

While the Fleischer studio did indeed hire many artists to help complete the feature, most of the key production people on *Mr. Bug* were long-time Fleischer veterans.

In many ways, *Mr. Bug* is the culmination of several important signature themes found in Fleischer cartoons.

First, the urban setting is a dead give-away. No other cartoon studio so thoroughly based its work in cities than the Fleischer Studio.

Another re-occuring theme is the film's conflict between big and small characters. There had been several cartoons in the past in which small characters had to deal with large ones, (before *Gulliver's Travels*), and *Mr. Bug* continues this theme.

The great nightclub scene in which Hoppity is shocked is very much like a wonderful scene in *Educated Fishes*. Both scenes get great effects by placing vivid colors on a jet black background. The Fleischers were also producing hallucination animation since the early Thirties and the surreal Betty Boop shorts.

The construction scenes also are typical Fleischer. If there was one studio whose cartoons were at times dominated by machine-based gags, it was the Fleischer Studio. The construction scenes with the near-misses of bugs and men is also reminiscent of the great Popeye cartoon *A Dream Walking*.

Basing the musical score around very contemporary popular music also is a continuation of a great Fleischer tradition. Hoagy Carmichel's songs are quite hummable, even today.

The use of the rotoscope was much better in *Mr. Bug* than its use in *GT*. Since all the characters in *GT* were supposed to be human, the rotoscoping of Gulliver as a stylistic device really didn't make much sense. In *Mr. Bug*, though, the rotoscoping of the humans does have a real point, as it visually defines the two worlds, insect and human.

The opening of the film with the elaborate model of Manhattan is also something one could expect of the studio that had its unique "3-D" system using scale models.

The Bug in *Mr. Bug*

So if *Mr. Bug* is indeed a "real" Fleischer cartoon, why isn't it as celebrated as other Fleischer productions? The animation is excellent, the voice work solid, and the backgrounds are superb. What's wrong with it?

The star, himself, Hoppity.

Dave Fleischer and the story department were apparently influenced by the populist comedies of Frank Capra. It doesn't take much guesswork that Hoppity's laid-back character was a variation of the sort of performances that had made Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper huge stars in Capra productions.

Part of the star system, which was at its height in the late Thirties and early Forties, was its ability to establish a "type" for an actor. Both Stewart and Cooper were fine performers, but they certainly played within an established persona. As time passed both actors certainly saw their range of roles widen, but in 1940, audiences knew what to expect when they saw Cooper or Stewart up on the screen. The actors were "pre-sold."

Audiences certainly were not "pre-sold" with Hoppity. Background information could have fleshed out the characterization and made it more compelling. The audience doesn't know why Hopppity left the community, or why he had come back. We don't know why people are excited to see him. All we're told is that he's coming back. What's the big deal? Hoppity is shy, laid-back, and self-effacing. He's an underdog. But audiences needed more than just that.

Without establishing some sort of context, the film's lead character is rather colorless. C. Bagley Beetle and his cohorts are far more interesting, and this imbalance is highly destructive to the film.

Honey Bee's character is also fairly bland, a condition that was typical of how many women's roles were written in the early Forties. Honey is just a prop at times.

Without a truly interesting hero and heroine, the other elements of *Mr. Bug* must compensate by being very strong, and, in this writer's opinion, they are. For me, *Mr. Bug* is a enjoyable film with many attributes, but also with several key flaws.

One of this writer's favorite aspects of this film is its opening and closing sequences. The opening credits unroll over a tremendous panning shot from the heavens down through the skyline of New York City to the small house and yard in which the story takes place. The closing scene has the insect community looking over the edge of the penthouse fence with one character observing that the humans look just like insects. The picture opens and closes with an unexpected observation on the relative insignificance of mankind in the great scheme of the universe.

Perhaps that's why I feel *Mr. Bug Goes To Town* deserves to be re-discovered. Despite its flaws, *Mr. Bug Goes To Town* remains an ambitious story-telling effort. Attempting not to tell fairy tales like their only competitor, the Fleischer brothers produced an urban fable about faith and dreams ultimately winning over greed and deceit. The fact that it had frailties of its own somehow seems appropriate.

C. Bagley Beetle and his hench-bug Swat stole the show in *Mr. Bug*.

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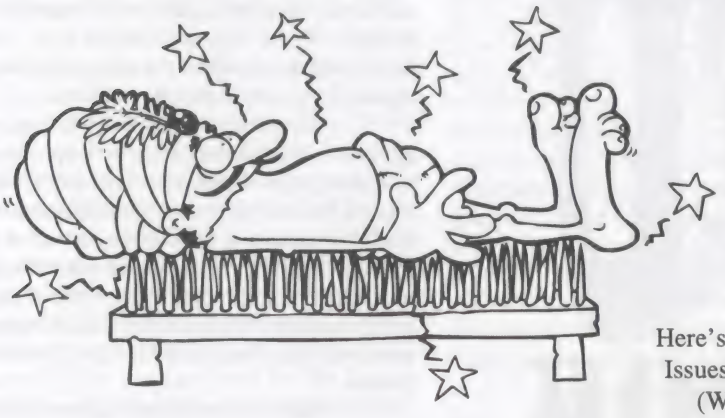

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PRIVATE SNAFU & MR. HOOK

Warner Brothers Goes to War: The Private Snafu and Mr. Hook Shorts

The little-seen films from World War II are a treasure trove of gags and inventive animation

by Eric O. Costello

Like many other American institutions, during the Second World War, the motion picture studios of Hollywood were mobilized for the war effort. Many stars worked to raise money for he war effort through sales of War Bonds; a few other notables, like Clark Gable, John Huston and Jimmy Stewart, volunteered to serve in the armed forces. The movie studios, aside from turning out entertainment for civilians and soldiers alike, also engaged in producing training films for the use of the armed forces. While many of these films were straightforward, live-action affairs, Hollywood also realized the usefulness of adapting a medium well-known to the average American soldier—that of the animated cartoon. While making the soldier laugh, the film could also get across a message to the soldier that was important, such as why he was fighting, or the importance of discipline or work.

This article will explore two such series of cartoons, which were largely produced by the cartoon studio at Warner Brothers, the studio famous for producing Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig. While difficult to find, the series of shorts comprising the Private Snafu and Mr. Hook cartoons comprise an interesting insight into the messages that the armed forces wished to instill in its fighting men. And, more to the point, the cartoons are still funny, even half a century after they were produced.

The Rise of Training Films

Military training films were, of course, not a new phenomenon in the Second World War; they had been used in the First World War as well. What is perhaps surprising is that some of the training films made for that first war were animated. J.R. Bray, one of the inventors of the cel/background system of animation still in use today, convinced the U.S. Army to sponsor a series of training films. One, for example, showed how to use the Stokes mortar, and others showed how to read maps, using clay models of terrain features. One film showed animation of a mine-layer, leaving its mother ship. The cartoons were regarded as a success, and instrumental in cutting the time for training to a fraction of that previously required. (One of Bray's assistants on this project was none other than Max Fleischer, who would later produce the Betty Boop and Popeye shorts for Paramount in the 1930s.)

Hollywood, by the early 1940s, had made quantum leaps in its technological, financial and administrative abilities, compared with the First World War era. More than ever, Hollywood could produce training films with sophistication and, hopefully, realism.

Some series were successful, such as the *Why We Fight* documentary series produced by Frank Capra, which was required viewing for new recruits. However, some films lacked credibility, either in production values, or in acting. Other films simply did not hold the attention of soldiers. Eventually, it was discovered that trainees watched animated shorts more attentively than live action films, or illustrated lectures.

Many of the military animated training films were produced by the 18th Air Force Base Unit (First Motion Picture Unit), which was known as "Fum-Pooh" by its men. Organized in 1942, the animation unit was based at the former Hal Roach Studio in Culver City, and included men from the Disney, Warner Brothers, Fleischer, and MGM cartoon studios. The unit's head was Major Rudy Ising, who had been instrumental in the founding of the Warner Brothers and MGM cartoon studios. Other notable animators in the unit included Frank Thomas, Bern Wolf, Van Kaufman and Joe Smith.

Other military work was contracted out by the military or civilian authorities to the commercial studios. The Walt Disney Studio, for example, was producing 95% of its fiscal 1942-1943 production for the military.

Generally, once the military usefulness of a film had ended, such as when a plane or a weapon became obsolete, all copies of a film would be destroyed by the military. This is one reason that many training films and other films produced for the military are difficult to locate.

The Army-Navy Screen Magazine

One of the Hollywood notables who joined the military was Frank Capra, the award-winning director of such films as *It Happened One Night* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.* His 834th Signal Service Photographic Detachment produced numerous films between June 1942 and September 1945, including the aforementioned *Why We Fight* series, and a number of other documentaries.

One project was rather different: it was a biweekly newsreel, not unlike the newsreels that would have been familiar to civilian theatregoers. Originally called The War, the title of the series, which eventually reached fifty issues, was changed after the first ten issues to *The Army-Navy Screen Magazine.*

Generally, the issues came out twice a month, and were 20 minutes in length, with three to five segments. Often, the issues were shown with a Hollywood film, just as a civilian newsreel was.

The producers of *The Army-Navy Screen Magazine* decided to add an occasional animated segment to the magazine. The producers initially approached the Walt Disney studio, which worked up a proposal for a film, Introducing Snafu, which was storyboarded. It became apparent that the Disney studio's production was going to be expensive, and the Army sought other bids. Leon Schlesinger, the then-producer of the Warner Brothers cartoons, saw an opportunity and substantially underbid the Disney studio, winning the contract. One source cites a proposed cost for the Disney production of $101 per foot, without storyboard, as compared to a Warner Brothers proposal of $20 per foot, with storyboard.

Producing Snafu

Having won the contract, the Warner Brothers studio began working with the members of Capra's unit to produce the cartoons. From what little has been written about the series, it would appear that the storyboard was worked on for the most part between the Capra unit and the directors of the Warner Brothers cartoon units, who would then, once the storyboard had been approved by the appropriate military officials, animate the cartoons much as their contemporary civilian output would be produced, with their own units.

The cartoons themselves are uncredited, which makes it difficult to assign precise credits to each cartoon. The individual styles of the cartoons make it relatively easy to attribute certain cartoons to certain directors. In the period 1943-1945, the directors would have been Isadore (Friz) Freleng, Charles M. (Chuck) Jones, Frank Tashlin, and Robert (Bob) Clampett. The identity of the animators for each cartoon can only be guessed at, based on the staffs working for those directors. It is not certain how much influence the civilian writing staff at the cartoon studio (Tedd Pierce, Warren Foster, Michael Maltese, Tubby Millar, et al.) had on the writing of each script. The military writing staff for the cartoons is known to a certain extent: it is known that Ted Geisel (a/k/a Dr. Seuss) worked on some cartoons, others were worked on by P.D. Eastman, and at least one other by W. Munro Leaf, the author of *Ferdinand the Bull*. Chuck Jones has identified Otto Englander, Eastman, Dave Rose, Eugene Fleury and Dave Hilberman as the creators of the stories and storyboards. Geisel is often mentioned in discussions of the Snafu series, though it appears that after the first few cartoons in the series, Geisel had less involvement in the series. One interesting side effect of Geisel's involvement was the start of a long-lasting friendship with Chuck Jones, which would, years later, produce a classic adaptation of Geisel's book *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

(It is also possible that Geisel may have influenced the story of at least one civilian Warner Brothers cartoon. Frank Tashlin's cartoon *Plane Daffy* (1944) opens with an extended, catchy rhyming dialogue about Hata Mari, a seductive pigeon-spy. The tone of the dialogue is very close to the spirit of the cartoons Geisel worked on.)

It is certain that Carl W. Stalling and Tregoweth (Treg) Brown, the musical director and sound-effects engineer, respectively, at the Warner Brothers studio also contributed to the cartoons. As with the civilian cartoons, Stalling used his trademark style of mixing classical and contemporary songs to evoke mood and gags. As noted in the synopses, Stalling used in the Snafu cartoons some music that, for one reason or another, he never used in his civilian work. Voice work was performed by virtuoso Mel Blanc, as well as by Robert C. Bruce, who performed the narration, as he did in many Warner Brothers cartoons, particularly the Tex Avery travelogue cartoons of the late thirties and early forties.

The cartoons themselves vary in length, from between four to five minutes, and all were produced in black and white. Along with the Mr. Hook cartoons, these were the last black-and white productions at Warner Brothers, which, like other studios, discontinued production of black-and white cartoons during the war (the last commercially released cartoon being Frank Tashlin's *Puss 'n Booty* (1943).

Not all of the cartoons in the Snafu series were produced by Warner Brothers. A few were produced elsewhere. A predecessor of he UPA cartoon studio, which would become famous for its graphic style, used Snafu in two shorts in the *A Few Quick Facts* series, which

Training films for the military originated during the First World War. Pictured is animation pioneer Max Fleischer in the middle of producing an animated training film from that time. (G. Michael Dobbs collection)

were shorter in length than the average Snafu cartoon. One cartoon was produced by Ising's unit, and was directed by George Gordon. Another cartoon was in production at the end of the war at MGM, using Tex Avery's unit, but was canceled. Each of these cartoons is included below in the synopses.

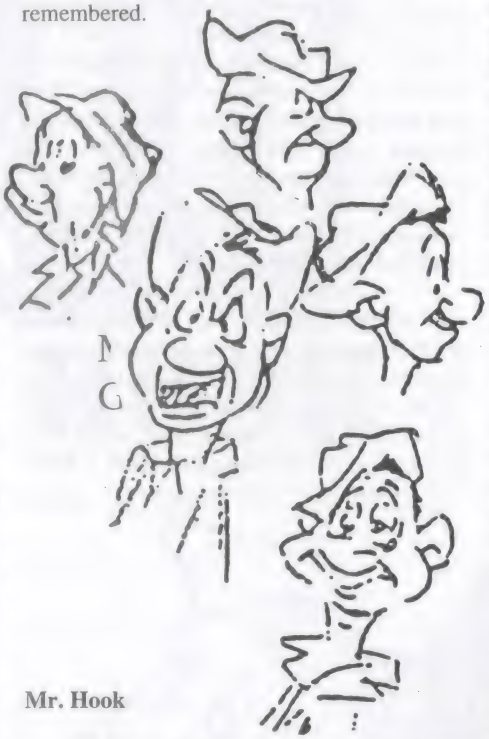
The notes accompanying the Bosko Video collection state that the total cost for the Snafu series was slightly less than $300,000.

Introducing Snafu

The point of the Snafu cartoons, at least for the greater part of the series, was to teach a lesson in a mildly didactic way, such as avoiding booby traps, the need for training (and not goldbricking), the desirability of saving one's pay, etc. The lessons were usually livened with typical Warner Brothers slapstick humor. (And characters: Bugs Bunny makes two cameo appearances in Snafu cartoons, one in *Gas* and one in *Three Brothers*.) It was also livened up, to a certain extent, with language and themes that would never have passed the Hays Office, which censored Warner Brothers' civilian cartoons; the cartoons featured the occasional hell and damn, as well as some cheesecake shots, as well as two remarkable, if subdued, references to prostitution. The cartoons also contain references to and caricatures of the enemy, including many Japanese caricatures that probably prevent wide broadcast or distribution of some of these cartoons today, much as the recent release on videodisc of Freleng's cartoon *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944) raised a protest by some Japanese, and the withdrawal of the discs with the cartoon.

Snafu (named for the well-known Army acronym Situation Normal: All Fouled/F—ed Up) himself has been described as "licentious, lazy, envious of every duty but his own, a shirker and the Warner animation department's idea of the American fighting man in his larval form, or a positive genius at doing things the wrong way [...] [h]e has the brains of a half-wit mosquito and the egotism of a whole regiment of shavetails. If there's one chance in a million of getting things balled up, Snafu will find it."

Actually, this is somewhat unfair to Snafu. In a number of cartoons, such as *Gripes, The Infantry Blues* and *Three Brothers*, Snafu picks up on the important lesson of the short, and goes on with his job. In many cases, he is assisted by the Technical Fairy First Class, the Army's answer to Tinkerbell; he's a little sprite with wings, a cigar, and a five o'clock shadow, who often grants Snafu his wishes, and then points out the lesson to Snafu (and the audience). In a few others, such as *No Buddy Atoll* and *Operation: Snafu*, Snafu is actually the hero of the short. But, of course, there are the cartoons where Snafu lives up to his name, and pays the ultimate price for his mistakes, such as getting run over by a Japanese tank in *The Goldbrick* or blown up by one of a series of *Booby Traps*, leaving his fate as a lesson to be remembered.



Mr. Hook

Rather less information is available on the Mr. Hook series. Until very recently, it was assumed that the series had never been shown, or was otherwise lost. It was not until recently that prints of a few entries in the series turned up in the collection of Norman Hatch, a former combat photographer, that the cartoons were made available for viewing.

The little sailor character (hook is navy slang for an anchor) appears to have been the creation of Hank Ketcham, who in the years before he created Dennis the Menace, and before the war, had been an animated cartoonist at the Walter Lantz and Walt Disney studios. Ketcham was an enlisted man who worked for the War Bond Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy in Washington, D.C.

For the most part, Ketcham created sales and training material for the War Bond program. Wanting to utilize his animation background, Ketcham created Mr. Hook to star in what was essentially a commercial for the purchase of War Bonds by sailors on an allotment program. Ketcham successfully persuaded the Office of the Secretary of the Navy to produce the cartoon, which was farmed out to the Walter Lantz studio. The color production was released in 1943, and proved to be successful. Ketcham then followed up with a further series of three minute black-and-white cartoons. These were also approved and, as Ketcham notes in his autobiography, he made a trip to Warner Brothers, the home of Bugs Bunny, to produce the cartoons, which were released in 1945. Unfortunately, Ketcham provides no details of his work at Warner Brothers.

As with the Snafu cartoons, it is possible to attribute cartoons to individual directors, and to assume participation by Stalling, Brown, and Blanc. Hook's voice was provided by Arthur Lake, who played the comic strip character Dagwood Bumstead on film and on radio. It is, however, difficult to assign animation credits, and it is not known exactly what role Ketcham had versus Pierce, Maltese and Foster (or other military personnel) in the development of the story.

Hook, unlike Snafu, is consistently sensible: he socks away his pay in war bond allotments (compare this with Snafu's foolishness with money in Pay Day). The cartoons, which use a soft-sell, humorous approach, demonstrate the benefits and advantages of saving money. The armed forces brass were, apparently, greatly concerned about how the soldiers and sailors would spend their back pay (which could be quite substantial) when they were released, and naturally tried to promote the kind of attitude Hook represented.

Like the Snafu cartoons, a little cheesecake is used to liven up the humor. This is particularly true of the surviving Hook cartoon directed by Bob Clampett, *Tokyo Woes*, in which a little anthropomorphic war bond, after supplying Hook with clothes, money and a car, is trying to figure out something else Hook wants; Hook spots a sexy dame, and says, "Yeah, but I can take care of that myself."

Four cartoons in the Hook series are presently known to exist. One is the longer color cartoon produced by the Lantz Studio and released in 1943, and three are the relatively shorter black and white cartoons produced by Warner Brothers that were released in 1945. The synopses of these cartoons are noted below.

Synopses

The information below is taken mainly from the prints of the Snafu shorts available on the Bosko Video and Rhino collections, along with information from other sources, particularly Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald's classic *Merrie Melodies and Looney Tunes: An Illustrated Guide to the Warner Brothers Cartoons* (Henry Holt, New York, 1989 [2nd Ed.]) All running times are approximate.

Coming Snafu

(Jones, June 1943) Running time: 2:53

Using the style of a coming attractions trailer, this cartoon introduces Snafu, which the narrator indicates stands for Situation Normal All [arch pause] Fouled Up. Snafu thinks the Army is pretty swell, but could use a few changes. Snafu's lack of attention to duty is demonstrated by walking off the end of a pier

(while looking at a girlie poster), and destroying a plane he is towing, because he has his mind on a song about a burlesque dancer. A quick series of drawings indicates that Snafu can be found in many different branches of the Army, such as the artillery, tank corps, and paratroops. Snafu argues with some MPs, and gets put in the stockade. After a brief listing of some coming episodes, the cartoon cuts to a horse laughing at Snafu. As the cartoon ends, the narrator says, "This...is Snafu," and the camera focuses on the horse's rear end.

This film is the shortest of the WB-produced Snafus, in keeping with its trailer-like theme. The cartoons listed are *Gripes, Spies, The Goldbrick* and *Booby Traps.* The first three were the next cartoons released, but *Booby Traps* would not be released until some time later. Snafu looks a bit different in this cartoon than he would in later episodes; he has freckles and seems a bit smaller. The horse's ass theme would appear again in *Spies* and *Booby Traps*, as would the burlesque song, in *The Home Front.*

Gripes

(Freleng, July 1943) Running time: 4:28

The cartoon, which is all in rhyme, opens with Snafu complaining that he joined up to fight the Japs and the Germans, but he's stuck with KP, policing the camp, waiting in line, and getting injections from doctors (one on the girlie tattoo on his arm, which yells), which he views as a pain in the prat. Sick in bed (perhaps from the injections), Snafu opines that if he ran the army, he'd do things differently. Enter Technical Fairy First Class, who gives Snafu a promotion. "You're Master Sarge, Super Sarge, Hoopity-Doo/You're boss of the works, now get going Snafu!" Snafu takes over with his new policy, which includes liberal leave, allowing the wearing of zoot suit uniforms, and dames riding in jeeps (one of which tows an outhouse). Snafu, relaxing while being fanned by ladies, is gloating over his policy, when the Technical Fairy makes his reappearance, warning of German planes. Snafu attempts to rally the troops, but the Technical Fairy tells him that they've got no morale or discipline; indeed, they tell Snafu "Nuts!" and go back to their drinking and wenching. Snafu attempts to hide from a bomb, which digs him out and blasts him. It turns out that it was all a dream; Snafu rushes back to KP duty. The Technical Fairy says "The moral, Snafu, is the harder you work/ the sooner we're gonna beat Hitler, that jerk," and exchanges thumbs-up with Snafu, before vanishing (and reappearing to retrieve his cigar, which explodes).

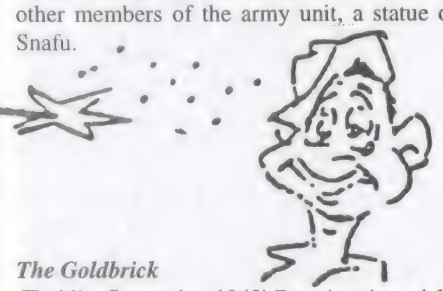
The rhyme scheme of this cartoon is catchy, and clearly reflects Geisel's influence on the cartoon. The zoot suit is an interesting contemporary touch; in fact, they were banned during the war, because they wasted so much cloth. The storyboard for this cartoon was reproduced in the July 21, 1943 edition of *The New York Times Magazine*, just as the cartoon was released. Only the Motion Picture Branch of the Special Services Division is referenced in the article; no other credits are given.

Spies

(Jones, August 1943) Running time: 3:49

" I just learned a secret/it's a honey, it's a pip./But the enemy is listening, so I'll never let it slip./Cause when I learn a secret, boy/I zipper up my lip!" Snafu boasts of his ability to keep a secret, but this cartoon demonstrates how easy it is for the enemy to put together seemingly innocuous pieces of information together to make up a whole. No matter whether Snafu is dropping a tip to his mother on the phone, buying a magazine at a newsstand, getting drunk in a bar, or snuggling up to a seductive Nazi spy (with steno machine on garter and carrier pigeon in hat), there are spies everywhere (even in moose heads) to take down his information. Eventually, enough information gets to Hitler so as to enable him to send a wolfpack of subs after Snafu's transport ship. The ship gets away, but Snafu is blown, literally, to hell. Snafu wonders "Now who in hell do you suppose it was/that let my secret out?" A Hitler devil obliges by showing Snafu a mirror, which turns Snafu's reflection into a horse's ass.

Another Geisel-influenced script. He seems to have also had a hand in design, as the cart horse and the moose heads both bear evidence of Suessian design (particularly in the clever use of the antlers to form a swastika). The three spies hiding behind the magazines are, from left to right, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Luftwaffe chief Hermann Goering, and what is probably meant to be Japanese emperor Hirohito (the magazines they are reading are meant to evoke the contemporary magazines *Life, Liberty* and *Collier's*). This would be the only time the Italians would be mentioned in the Snafu series, as Mussolini was deposed on July 25, 1943, shortly before the release of this cartoon, and Italy surrendered unconditionally to the Allies on September 8, 1943. The magazine the newsstand operator is reading before Snafu talks to him is titled *Sex.* Stalling makes use of the Raymond Scott perennial "Powerhouse" during the scene showing the effect of booze on Snafu's brain. Jones and Geisel won an award for this cartoon from the other members of the army unit, a statue of Snafu.



The Goldbrick

(Tashlin, September 1943) Running time: 4:15

Snafu's pleasant dream (his whistle/ snores rustling the skirt of a pinup) are rudely ended by the bugle call right in his ear. Noting the weather and the early hour, Snafu indicates his wish to get out of drill. Precisely why I am here! intones the Goldbrick, a fat, slobby version of the Technical Fairy. The Goldbrick, in rhyme, encourages Snafu to fake sickness to get out of drill, dig a slit trench shallow enough only for a nap, and to get out of chores he hates. At the end of training, Snafu notes that he's put on weight. His happy mood ends when his unit is in the South Pacific. Out of shape, he tries to feign sickness (remembering the Goldbrick's advice), and enters Honorable Booby Trap Hospital, where he is pounded by a huge mallet. He escapes, only to be pursued by a huge Japanese tank. Snafu remembers to dig a slit trench, but also remembers the Goldbrick's advice about digging a few inches. Without sufficient protection, Snafu is run over by the tank and killed. Standing over the grave, the Goldbrick pulls off his mask, revealing himself to be a Japanese. He cries "dear Goldbrick/I now go find more./If find enough Goldbrick/ Japan could win war."

The cartoon's lyrics are set to the meter and tune of "Tit-Willow," from the second act of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Mikado.* Another *Mikado* selection would show up in Operation Snafu. This cartoon, in its explosions and appearances of the Goldbrick, uses rather more effects animation than was normal for a Snafu cartoon. This cartoon may also have been written by Geisel, but unlike *Spies* and *Gripes*, he is usually not credited in the literature on Snafu with writing this

cartoon.

The Infantry Blues

(Jones, September 1943) Running time: 4:28

In another rhyming cartoon, Snafu sings a bluesy lament of a dogface's life, complete with marching in snow, jungle and desert heat. Observing a sign indicating the next rest room is 18,000 miles away, Snafu wishes he had joined the Tank Corps, because those guys have got it sweet/they do all their fighting on a nice, soft seat. Enter the Technical Fairy, who grants him a transfer. Snafu is put in an out of control tank, and just barely manages to stop the tank at a precipice. This kinda work just a'int my meat/I wish to hell I'd joined the fleet! The Technical Fairy obliges by putting him on a patrol boat, where Snafu gets seasick. The Technical Fairy interprets his gasps for air as a request for a transfer to the Air Corps, and Snafu is put in a plane. Snafu loses control of the the plane (the blacking-out effect nicely suggested by a blind being lowered in a cross-section of Snafu's head), and crashes it into a mountain. Snafu falls out, rolling back to where he began. The Technical Fairy hands him his pack, and they sigh, " All the roads are pretty tough/parley voo./And all the services are tough/parley voo./ So whether you fight as soldier or gob/get in there and pitch and fix the job/hinkey dinkey parley voo."

Another cartoon that may or may not have been written by Geisel; the rhymes do sound like the other cartoons attributable to Geisel. The Technical Fairy's auctioneer-like chant when he is transferring Snafu is a parody of that used in the Lucky Strike cigarette commercials, and the high-speed spiel of Speed Riggs. The plane Snafu flies is a Lockheed P-38 Lightning (note the Technical Fairy uses P-38 in his chant) with its distinctive twin-boom design. Note how Snafu's pack is much smaller at the end of the cartoon than it is at the beginning! Stalling plays appropriate military music in the sequences, moving from "The Cassions Go Rolling Along" to" Anchors Aweigh," and "Wild Blue Yonder."

Fighting Tools

(Clampett, October 1943) Running time: 4:34

A newspaper's headline announces that battle reports prove US soldier best armed in world — our fighting tools unbeatable if given proper care. After a montage showing pictures of these weapons, cut to Snafu, reading the paper, who boasts that he'll be the war's greatest hero and "my wonderful guns/will murder them bums/and I'll bury them in the latrine-o." However, his attempts to deal with a huge German soldier all fail, in spite of the fact that the German is initially impressed with the weapons. His rifle is plugged up with mud from being stuck in the ground, and can't shoot. A machine gun, which initially chases away the German, overheats and melts, because Snafu didn't connect up the cooling water. An artillery piece is so musty and dusty and mighty damn rusty (and has ducks, mice, and assorted pots and pans in it) that it cannot fire. Snafu tries to get away in his jeep, but the German, jeering him as what a "dumnkopf/what a clown/just the type of boob/who lets his battery run down!," blows him up with a grenade. Snafu ends up in a Prison Kamp, his naked rear being transformed into a horse's ass.

This is probably one of the few cartoons where an animator's style clearly shows through: the artillery scene, in my view, was probably done by future director Bob McKimson, who was a ranking animator in Clampett's unit at the time. Kudos to Blanc for his excellent impression of an overheating machine gun! A few WB touches liven up this

Fighting Tools

cartoon, particularly the Kate Hepburn-like duckling who murmurs rally it is in a Bryn Mawr accent. The newspaper is the same one used in Clampett's *Tortoise Wins By a Hare* (1943), as evidenced by the headlines regarding voting and a Japanese cruiser.

The Home Front

(Tashlin, November 1943) Running time: 4:22

Up in the Arctic, where it is so cold it would freeze the nuts off a jeep (cut to a jeep losing its wheel nuts), Snafu (who is sitting on top of a potbellied stove) is listening to a record player playing a sentimental song. Either out of homesickness or irritation, Snafu smashes up the player with a hammer. Addressing us, he tells us of what he thinks the folks back home are doing, where they don't even know there's a war going on. He imagines his dad shooting pool at Kelly's pool hall (neat gag with a cloud of cigar smoke flicking a ball into the pocket), his mother playing bridge and gossiping with her friends like hens, Grandpa attending a burlesque show (in a well-directed sequence of dancers in various stages of undress), and his girl friend Sally Lou being wooed by a chap with a Charles Boyer accent, who, wolf-like, tells her she has big eyes (but his eyes are focused on other parts of her anatomy). Snafu wishes out loud he could see them, to tell them a thing or to. The Technical Fairy appears, indicating that maybe Snafu has a point (and also indicating that Brass monkeys, but it's cold!). Using a televisor, he shows Snafu what the folks are really doing. Dad is building tanks, Mom is planting a Victory Garden, which is doing well with the aid of horse manure, Grandpa is riveting ships (and launching them, to the Morse Code V for Victory), and Sally Lou has joined the WACs (Women's Army Corps). Snafu kisses the image of Sally Lou, which turns into the technical Fairy, who gushes, "Gee, I didn't know you cared!"

Snafu's girlfriend Sally Lou would make another appearance, in *Censored*. The horse that says, "Coming, Mother!" in answer to the call for manure is imitating the character of Henry Aldrich from the radio program *The Aldrich Family*, a joke used in many other WB cartoons, such as *Book Revue* (Clampett, 1946) and *Hollywood Steps Out* (Avery, 1941). Tashlin seems to have had a liking for the particular cat in this cartoon, since it also makes an appearance in *Brother Brat*, a 1944 civilian cartoon. The reference to television is interesting, considering full-scale broadcasting would not exist until after the end of the war. Geisel has been credited with suggesting the jeep/nuts gag. "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground" (which would be used again in *Hot Cross Bunny* (McKimson, 1948)) is an old, sentimental Civil War song on the subject of homesickness.

Rumors

(Freleng, December 1943) Running time: 4:16

Another rhyming cartoon, which opens with "'Twas a bright sunny day/with the air fresh and clean./Not a rumor was stirring except.../in the latrine." There, Snafu and a unnamed pal are talking about the weather. The pal makes a remark that it's a nice day for a bombing. Cut to a shot of what's cooking in Snafu's mind, as the thought gets transformed into I hear we're in for a bombing. The word is passed to another fellow, who passes it to a third man, via balloon juice (nice sight gag of balloon letting out air), followed by a baloney-making machine manufacturing baloney (to the tune of "Powerhouse") that fellow's head. He shoots off his mouth (literally), and the camp is soon overrun with flying wiener dogs. Shots show soldiers discussing rumors of Brooklyn Bridge being bombed, and enemy troops on the White House lawn. Snafu's lunch is interrupted by his wiener discussing faulty ammunition, and his hard-boiled egg releases a creature who announces the Japs are in California. Snafu flees to his bed, and all around the camp, pursued by shadowy, otherworldly creatures who talk about

secret weapons, various Allies quitting, and, finally, one doleful fellow who announces It's all over, we lost the war. Cut to a sign indicating the camp has been quarantined for rumoritis. Snafu himself is in a padded cell, laughing hysterically, pausing to observe nice weather for a rumor, isn't it?

The closing gag, showing a man feeding baloney into a meat grinder, is a parody of the Paramount newsreel cameraman. Stalling, aside from using "Powerhouse", uses another old friend, "A Cup of Coffee, A Sandwich, and You" in the dining hall sequence. It would seem Geisel had some influence on this cartoon; note the creature sharing Snafu's bed, which is distinctly Seussian.

Booby Traps

(Clampett, July 1944) Running time: 4:13

The narrator (probably Robert Bruce), speaking over views of a battlefield, announces that the enemy has fled, but that attention must be paid to the danger of booby traps. Enter Snafu, skipping to a light, happy rendition of "You're In the Army Now." Snafu spots a booby trapped shower, and, as the narrator intones, "if you are a boob, you will be trapped!" Snafu snaps back, "I wish ta hell you'd shuddup! I ain't no boob and I won't be trapped! Nyaah!" Snafu continues on his way, and is nearly done in by a camel with a land mine for an udder, Snafu observing the obvious that this is one of them there booby traps. Snafu, after fleeing this trap, passes by a harem, populated with seemingly dozens of beautiful dames. But Snafu has eyes first for only a (booby-trapped) piano, where he attempts to play "Those Endearing Young Charms,' but misses the last two notes (and the trap). Opining that he could never get those last two notes anyhoo, Snafu spots a hookah, which he rushes to, indicating that he hadn't had a good smoke in years. Fortunately, he fails to light the TNT-laden hookah. Finally spotting a dame, he gives her a friendly smack on the rump. He investigates the metallic sound, finally figuring out that something new has been added! At this point, the dame is revealed to have, quite literally, booby traps, and Snafu, in fear, flees the scene (narrowly avoiding a huge rat trap, trapdoors, and knives). Fanning himself, Snafu does not notice a tiny clockwork Hitler with a triangle that comes out of a door. The mechanical Fuehrer plays "Those Endearing Young Charms" correctly, putting emphasis on the last two notes. Snafu, thus clued in, rushes back inside to the piano, and plays the tune correctly, blowing himself up. Cut to Snafu as an angel on a cloud with a harp. Snafu sighs, but then observes that at least up here, "I don't have to worry about no booby traps!" He plays "Those Endearing Young Charms" on his harp, and blows himself up again.

I believe that this is the first time "Those Endearing Young Charms," in the context of a bobby trapped musical instrument, was used in a WB cartoon. Freleng would later use the same gag to great effect in *Ballot Box Bunny* and *Show Biz Bugs* (1951 and 1957, respectively). Snafu imitates Jerry Colonna, one of Bob Hope's sidekicks on his radio program, in saying one of Colonna's trademark catchlines something new has been added! Colonna's other mannerisms were used in other WB cartoons, and Colonna himself was caricatured in *Hollywood Steps Out* (Avery, 1941) and *Greetings Bait* (Freleng, 1943). Clampett used a very similar Colonna gag in *The Hep Cat* (1942), where the cat realizes he is wooing a puppet. Another common WB gag is the Yiddish-inflected could be used by the camel, which is found in numerous cartoons.

Although largely forgotten today, radio and movie comedian Jerry Colonna was a familiar fixture in radio and movies in the Forties and Fifties. Known for his handlebar mustache, his bulging eyes, and high-pitched voice, Colonna's caricature frequently popped in cartoons.

Snafuperman

(Freleng, March 1944) Running time: 4:30

Snafu is in the barracks, accompanying "Little Brown Jug" with the aid of helmet, mess gear and footlocker. His annoyed barracksmates, who are trying to do some brainwork, tell him to pipe down. Snafu sneers that when he meets the Nazis, he isn't going to clunk them on the head with no books..."what ya gotta give them dopes is a belly full of lead." As Snafu is demonstrating, with verbal sound effects, he is interrupted by the Technical Fairy, who greets Snafu with a sarcastic "Hello, Superman!" Snafu says if he was Superman, he'd show the Nazis a thing or two. The Technical Fairy obliges, turning him into Snafuperman. Snafu grabs a bomb, intending to bomb Berlin, without reading navigation maps. Only the Technical Fairy's intervention prevents him from bombing the Capitol Building in Washington. Snafu then spots what he thinks is a Japanese tank; it turns out to be an American tank, with a flag on the side yet, containing a very irritated general. Snafu's embarrassed explanation is interrupted by a German bombing raid on a nearby port. Snafu does a good job of catching the bombs, even going into a chimney stack to get one, but does not realize that the bombs are delayed action bombs, which blow him up. Cut to Snafu, groaning in a hospital bed. The Technical Fairy asks if there is anything he can do. Motioning the Fairy closer, Snafu indicates, by yelling, that he wants a Field Manual.

One interesting twist to this cartoon is that at the time Snafu is changed into Snafuperman, Stalling uses the fanfare theme that introduced the Paramount Superman cartoons! Superman had been a target of WB caricatures before (*Goofy Groceries* (Clampett, 1941) and *Super Rabbit* (Jones, 1943)) Field Manuals were manuals distributed to armed forces personnel that explained how to do various tasks or gave advice on handling situations; one would be seen, for example, in It's Murder She Says, on dealing with malaria. Freleng also used the phrase "mess of Messerschmits" (referring to the German fighter) gag in *Daffy - The Commando* in 1943.

Private Snafu vs. Malaria Mike

(Jones, March 1944) Running time: 4:37

Malaria Mike (a/k/a Amos Quito) is contemplating his Wanted poster, observing that it doesn't do justice to his nose. Spying an exposed rear end in a nearby stream (a choice cut, according to Mike's meat chart), Mike recognizes Snafu, indicating that he never forgets a face! Mike makes a number of attempts to get Snafu, but Snafu manages, through dumb luck, to evade Mike. A nearby tree is not so lucky, and goes into a series of fevers and chills after getting socked by Mike. Snafu is going to bed. Much to Mike's delight, Snafu decides not to use his GI insect repellent. Mike attempts to attack Snafu, but is stopped by the netting around Snafu's bed. Just as Mike thinks he's beaten, Snafu stands up in bed to kiss a pinup poster, exposing his rear end. Threading a murderous barb on his nose, Mike checks the range and wind, and attacks. Cut to Mike, with

his child on his lap. The child asks Mike, "what did you do in the big war, Daddy?" Mike indicates that he did his bit, as the camera pans up to Snafu's head mounted on a wall. Iris out, but iris in Snafu's head. Speaking into a microphone, Snafu indicates that this program has been "brought to you by my sponsors the United States Army, distributors of GI Repellent, Netting, Atabrine Tablets, and Good Old Fashioned Horse Sense. Gee, I wish to hell I'd used them."

This is the first of no less than three cartoons devoted to malaria, which was one of the most serious causes of non-combat injuries for US troops during the war. Half of the US casualties in the Pacific were due to malaria, and each day 3 out of 1,000 men would be out of action because of it. Malaria was often a major problem during World War II in the Pacific and, for a while, in North Africa and Sicily, where, during the summer of 1943, the Allies had as many men out of action because of malaria as they did from battle wounds. In Burma during 1943, it was much worse. For every man evacuated for wounds, 120 were sent out for disease (mostly malaria). As there is no cure for malaria, all you can do is issue medicines that suppress the disease, try to kill the

mosquitoes (quite effective if you can regularly spray the area the troops are in), and evacuate the victims that are flat on their backs. You can see, therefore, why the topic was of prime importance to the armed forces, and why there was a push to use such preventative measures as Atabrine and mosquito repellent and netting.

A Lecture on Camouflage

(Jones, April 1944) Running time: 3:51

In this parody of Army lectures, the Technical Fairy uses Snafu as an illustration of camouflage techniques. Or, perhaps, mistakes in camouflage. The Technical Fairy first refers to Adam (cut to Snafu wearing nothing but a fig leaf.) The Fairy indicates that the fig leaf today is not enough, and camouflage is effective, but only if used intelligently. Snafu, for example, camouflages himself as a boat while on the road, narrowly avoiding being blown up by German artillery. Snafu uses a variety of machines to cover up his tracks, and the tracks made by the covering machines, etc. Relaxing in a forest, Snafu gives a light to a German soldier in a tree. Snafu realizes the obvious, when the tree blows a swastika into his smoke circle. Snafu is then chased by camouflaged rocks, trees, and other foliage. Clambering onto a camouflaged German gun, Snafu is blown out into a desolate area. The Fairy yells at Snafu to hide in a tree's shadow, which moves on him quickly, and then disappears. Snafu spots another shadow, which turns out to be one cast by a German balloon, which drops a bomb on Snafu. The Fairy ends the lecture, by stressing the importance of being in natural surroundings, which he demonstrates, by disguising himself as a merman in the company of two shapely (and topless) mermaids.

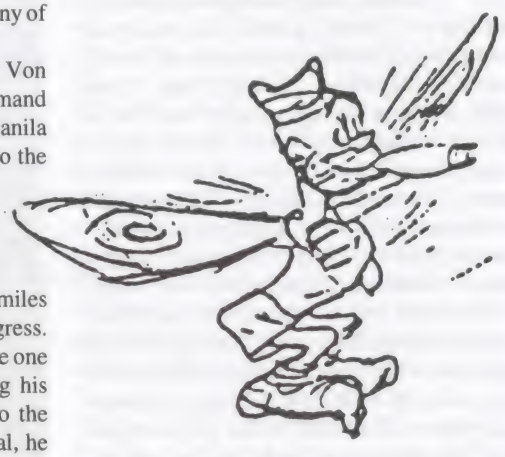
The line "You may fire when ready, Von Gridley" is a parody of a famous command given by Admiral Dewey at the battle of Manila Bay during the Spanish-American War to the captain of his flagship.

Gas

(Jones, May 1944) Running time: 4:28

At an army camp 3642 1/2 miles from Brooklyn, a 5 am gas drill is in progress. All of the camp reports in full gas kit, save one man. Guess who? Snafu, after finding his mask kit deep inside his sack, rushes to the scene. Under the angry eyes of a general, he first pulls out a filmy bra, and then Bugs Bunny, from his kit. Finally finding his mask, he puts it on, as moths fly out. The general addresses a subordinate, indicating "Do you think it possible that that man could stand a little further training in the care and use of the gas mask?" This is followed a highly stylized sequence in which a sergeant puts Snafu through gas drill and marching. Snafu takes off his mask, releasing a cloud of steam. Passing by a garbage can, we see Snafu eying it. Cut to the mask in the can, and Snafu lolling beneath a tree. Meanwhile, an anthropomorphic gas cloud parachutes from a plane. Burping (and begging our pardon, indicating that he has gas on the stomach), the cloud spots Snafu without his mask. Chortling, he splits into three clouds, and surrounds Snafu. Snafu, in the midst of a reverie, finally smells the cloud. He reaches for where his gas mask is, and realizes it isn't there. The cloud clicks its tongue, and chortles no mask. Snafu races for the garbage can, and finds a truck has taken it away. He chases the truck, as a tidal wave of gas crashes on him. We then see Snafu, wearing the mask, as the gas is sucked into his kit, banged around, and then ejected, as a yowling dog. The final shot shows Snafu cuddled up in bed with the mask, which then sports female eyes and a mouth and says "I didn't know you cared."

One of the great fears of Allied generals during the war was a repeat of the widespread gas warfare of World War I. As it turned out, chemical weapons were not used in combat in World War II, though there was an incident in 1943 when a US ship carrying mustard gas was bombed in the Italian port of Bari in 1943. The mustard gas got on the skins of people floating in the water, causing many deaths. Even so, great efforts were made to prepare soldiers for chemical warfare, not all of which were appreciated; there is a well-known Bill Mauldin cartoon which shows two soldiers walking along a road strewn with gas masks, one of them observing that an outfit had received the new gas masks. This is one of the few cartoons in which an individual animator has been noted for a



contribution; Robert (Bobe) Cannon, a standout in Jones' unit, and who would later direct cartoons for UPA, did the animation for the gas cloud. Note the great detail, even to the vegetation dying as the gas cloud moves along. Cannon does deserve great credit for his animation in this cartoon.

The Chow Hound

(Tashlin, July 1944) Running time: 4:17

In this rhyming cartoon, we see a bull (voiced by Robert Bruce) wooing a cow in the Panhandle. Just as he is about to start his honeymoon, war breaks out. The bull sees troop trains go by, including the one carrying Snafu. A patriotic bull, he volunteers, is inspected, and is processed (i.e. turned into tinned meat). From that point on, through the bull's narration, we see how much trouble the Army goes through to get food to Snafu. Through mine and sub-infested waters, through snow, through mountains, through deserts, the food gets to Snafu's distant camp. We cut to Snafu, who is looking at his watch, waiting for lunch. When the come and get it rings out, he is first in line, and pushes the cook into giving him a huge helping. Snafu

settles down to eat (humming "A Cup of Coffee, A Sandwich, and You"), watched by the ghost of the expectant bull, with some additional food that Snafu has squirreled away. Snafu eats (we see his belt expanding from empty to full). Snafu indicates it was a good meal, but he wasn't as hungry as he thought, and he throws away the leftover food. Enraged, the ghostly bull snorts, paws the ground, and blasts the puzzled Snafu high into the air with a head butt. Sadly looking at the thrown-away leftovers in the garbage pail, the bull turns to the audience and says, "Yes, I joined up the first day of war/ but now, I'm regretting my haste./I joined up as food for Snafu,/but all I became was just..waste!" and angrily slams down the lid.

In one of the shots showing the transport of the food, a truck is passing over a road, and a bridge is bombed out in front of it. A group of men, carrying a flag with a castle on it, rushes ahead of the truck and rebuilds the bridge in constant motion ahead of the truck. This is a tip of the hat to the Army Corps of Engineers, whose symbol is the castle shown on the flag. It is estimated that every man and woman sent overseas (combatant or non-combatant), the US shipped 12 tons of arms, equipment, and supporting material, and had to ship one ton each month of rations, clothing, medicines, ammunition, etc. to support them. Wastage of food, therefore, was of prime concern to Allied planners. This is the last of the Snafu cartoons that was done in rhyme; from now on, the Snafu cartoons would either be silent, or with straightforward dialogue.

Censored

(Tashlin, July 1944) Running time: 4:53

Snafu is writing a letter home to Sally Lou (his girlfriend from Tashlin's *The Home Front*), indicating that he thinks he is about to be shipped to the South Pacific (the canoe forming part of his equipment being a dead giveaway). Snafu attempts to sneak the letter by the unit censor, but is caught by an electronic eye, which triggers a machine that removes the letter from under Snafu's helmet, pulls him in front of a warning poster about careless writing, and hands him back the letter, liberally censored. On a troop train, Snafu tries again, folding the letter into a paper airplane, and trying to send it to a local yokel to mail. The censor's net in the caboose intercepts the letter, and sends the letter back to Snafu, cut into paper dolls and censored. On board his troop ship, Snafu tries a third time, with a carrier pigeon he pulls from his pocket. The assistant censor, a hawk, intercepts the pigeon, and chases it back to Snafu. A sheepish Snafu hands let letter to the hawk, who censors it with his beak. Snafu, on his island, tries a fourth time, utilizing the Technical Fairy to send the letter, which tells Sally Lou where he is, using their private code. In the letter, Snafu tells Sally Lou of an upcoming operation on Bingo Bango Island. Sally Lou leaks the word to her mother, and from there it spreads, all the way to a Japanese soldier on the island, who rushes to a radio to call Tokyo for help. Help arrives, and the island is transformed into a fortress. Snafu's confidence that they've caught the Japanese with their pants down is soon shattered when the task force is surrounded and blown up by the Japanese. Or so it seems. Snafu wakes up, and frantically tries to retrieve the letter. The Fairy as postman reappears, handing him the letter. Snafu censors his own letter, with the Fairy noting approvingly that it looks very good to him on the whole!

This was Tashlin's last Snafu cartoon, as he left to WB studio in 1944. His successor, Bob McKimson, would not direct any Snafu cartoons, though he would direct one of the Hook cartoons. The Technical Fairy is drawn rather differently in this cartoon, being much squatter than in other versions. The poster Snafu is shown, with a pen through a helmet,

was a very well-known poster of the era, and was found often on bases to warn about the dangers of revealing secrets in letters. Oddly, it would appear that Stalling is playing "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" from the Broadway play *Oklahoma!* in the scene showing Sally Lou receiving the letter (or a song very like it).

Outpost

(Jones, August 1944) Running time: 5:05

The narrator (Robert Bruce) lauds the determination and courage of the men who man the far-flung outposts of the Allied forces. Snafu, however, does not share this sentiment. He has been stuck on a godforsaken hole of an island for 249 days. His 249th request for transfer rejected, he throws a cigarette butt away, which is picked up by his companion, a gooney bird/sea gull creature, who takes it away to bury it in one of a number of piles. Snafu turns on a radio to listen to Dorothy Lamour singing "I'm In the Mood for Love," and dreams of a sarong-clad dame. The bird, seeing this, starts to dream of a sarong-clad lady bird, who changes places with Snafu's dream girl. Snafu, with irritation, tells the bird to scram. The bird goes off and finds a can in the water, labeled "Pickled Fish Eyes with Rice." With a shudder of disgust, the bird is about to throw away the can when he notices that on the bottom, it reads "Honorable K Ration Imperial Japanese Navy." The bird shows the can to Snafu, who makes a disgusted face and tells him to bury it, and goes back to dreaming of chasing the dame. Meanwhile, a group of admirals and generals is monitoring a Japanese task force, which they lose track of. They immediately request reports from all outposts. Snafu turns in a semi-sarcastic report about the events at his outpost (gags on flooding, heat, and rain), and ends with a note on the can. HQ wants a report on the can urgently. The bird scrambles to find the can, and finds it where Snafu suggests it is, under the rug (island). Snafu gives them details on the can, which leads to the wiping out of the task force. Snafu, not aware of this news, still mutters about the unimportance of his job, as the sun sinks quickly in the west.

"I'm In the Mood for Love" was one of Lamour's most famous wartime songs. If that is not, in fact, a recording of her, it is a very good imitation thereof. Note the slight error made in the gag on Snafu's initial report. He indicates the can is labeled fish eyes with rice, and the admirals respond with excitement pickled fish eyes with rice! How did they know they were pickled? Not explained is how a tin can, which presumably has been floating in the water for some time, would disclose an accurate location of the fleet suitable for a raid; well, this is a cartoon.

Payday

(Freleng, September 1944) Running time: 4:48

This cartoon is silent, with the exception of one line at the very end. It takes place in three little acts. In the first act, "Snafu is in the Middle East," looking with delight at the sights. Just as he is about to enter a souvenir shop, the Technical Fairy makes an appearance. The Fairy shows Snafu all that his savings could get him, including a post-war home, a post-war wife, a post-war car, and Snafu, Jr. Snafu is about to put his money into savings when he is lured away by an evil, bat-winged version of the Fairy (via music which takes the shape of a shapely woman) into a souvenir store, where Snafu spends his money, causing the car in the Fairy's picture to turn into a Model T, a horse cart, a bicycle and finally a pair of roller skates.

Act two: in the Caribbean, Snafu is counting his pay to a rhythmic beat, when he spots Sloppy Moe's, a beer joint. His path is blocked by the Fairy at a teller window, who shows him a card labeled No dollars, no sense! Snafu is about to make a deposit when the evil

Fairy starts luring him into the bar with Begin the Beguine and a ghostly cocktail shaker. The Technical Fairy tries to stop this by putting earmuffs on Snafu, but a tuba blast from the evil fairy takes the muffs off, and Snafu ends up drinking the garage, doghouse and the tree away from his home of the future. As the Fairy sits in disgust, he sees Snafu entering a hotel with a woman in twilight (a subdued reference to prostitution), and loses the chimney from his post war home.

Act three is in the Arctic. An Eskimo has just sold Snafu a huge totem pole (at the top of which is the evil Fairy). The Technical Fairy shows Snafu a sign that this is his last chance. Snafu is once again lured, by a disembodied hand shaking dice for craps. The Technical Fairy's efforts to stop him are useless, and Snafu, by rolling boxcars and snake-eyes (wonderfully rendered) loses, gradually, Snafu Jr., the wife, and his home (in little, gradual, bits). Snafu, to the tune of "Am I Blue?", leaves the crap game with only a box to cover himself. Sadder, but no wiser; upon finding a dime in the snow, he rushes back in, and we see Snafu lost the last little piece of the post-war house. Cut to a phone ringing in the hole what would have been the foundation of Snafu's house. A mouse answers the phone and delivers the only dialogue, "Who? Snafu? Snafu doesn't live here anymore!"

A brilliant cartoon that stands comparison with any of Freleng's civilian work (one thinks particularly of *Rhapsody in Rivets* (1941) or *Mouse Mazurka* (1949)), and shows his mastery of mixing timing, gags and music. Not only that, the cartoon's underlying message is delivered with both humor and force, making this one of the clearest lessons in the Snafu series. Stalling is also in peak form in this cartoon, which relies heavily on music to carry it; it is unusual that Stalling would use a non-WB copyrighted tune like "Begin the Beguine." Sloppy Moe's is probably a reference to Sloppy Joe's, a famous bar of pre-Castro Havana (which is also referenced in *Crazy Cruise* (Avery/Clampett, 1942)).

Target Snafu

(Freleng, October 1944) Running time: 4:30

This second in the series of malaria cartoons is a pseduo-documentary, showing the training of mosquitoes in their attacks on humans (in a parody of numerous wartime films showing the training of pilots). Draftees (including one kissing his girlfriend goodbye at the gate) go through physical exams, drill, manual of arms, and obstacle courses, all designed to earn their wings. The scene then shifts to the planning of a raid. The target looks impregnable, but then a recon plane comes in with information: Snafu has left a hole in his netting! With joy, the mosquitoes pick their target for tonight. In a coordinated raid, they sting Snafu, who ends up in a malaria ward, racked by fevers and chills. A pilot of the 13th Malaria Mauraders is shown as being decorated with the Order of the Rising Temperature.

Much of the animation for this cartoon was reused in Freleng's cartoon *Of Thee I Sting* (1946). Raymond Scott's "The Toy Trumpet" and "Woodenhead, Puddinhead Jones," two Stalling standards, can be heard on the soundtrack.

The Three Brothers

(Freleng, September 1944) Running time: 4:35

Snafu is in a quartermaster's depot, sorting shoes. The monotony of 9 1/2B and 9 1/2C shoes being livened only by the occasional 9 1/2D, Snafu goes crazy, banging his head on

a pipe. The Technical Fairy appears, inquiring what's the matter, as he looks "pertoibed." Snafu indicates he has a morale problem, and is envious of the jobs his brothers are going. Tarfu, for example, is in a message center, Snafu supposes, dealing with codes. In fact, in Tarfu's words, he is nursemaid to a bunch of feather dusters (i.e., carrier pigeons), which force him to get their food, sit on their eggs, and provide them with shower towels (Tarfu gets out of the egg hatching chore by cutting out a pinup and putting it on the eggs, which quickly hatch from the heat). Tarfu is in turn envious of brother Fubar, who works at an attack dog training center. Fubar is chased by a motley crew of pooches (including what appears to be a Mexican hairless) past a hospital (where they slow down and move quietly), through a Bugs Bunny hole (in the second of his two cameos), and eventually the dogs tree Fubar, who indicates his envy for Snafu's job. Snafu goes back to his job with fresh vigor, realizing his job is important, much to the happiness of the Technical Fairy.

Tarfu would make another appearance, as a sailor, in a cartoon produced by Rudy Ising, and described below. The Technical Fairy imitates Jimmy Durante, and uses one of his taglines, in saying at the end, "That's my boy who said that!"

In the Aleutians

(Jones, February 1945) Running time: 4:27

A travelogue cartoon set in the Aleutians, "the isles of enchantment (oh brother)." The cartoon first explains why the army is there, noting that the Japanese thought it the back door to America (until stopped by a huge soldier), and now it is the front door to Japan. Most of the gags center on the weather or conditions, the conditions that prevail, as a Jimmy Durante sea lion observes. The narrator indicates that Mother Nature blew her top in supplying the Aleutians with the variable weather. Snafu goes around with a wide variety of clothes to adapt to changing conditions. Men go piggyback in the mud. The williwaw, the local name for the fierce wind gusts, is also demonstrated. Jeeps go about in skis, and earthquakes can have an effect on crap games. The cartoon closes with the Durante sealion giving his line again.

This cartoon is a lot like the Tex Avery travelogue cartoons of the late Thirties and early Forties. It's not one of Jones' better efforts, as the cartoon moves from joke to joke without any real rhythm. This was the first of a few of the Snafu cartoons that did not have any real lesson in mind. The weather and terrain conditions are accurately depicted; there was a sardonic saying among the troops in the Aleutians that "There is a woman behind every tree in the Aleutians." The williwaws could reach up to 100 miles and hour, brining torrential rains and blinding blizzards, which combined with fog that often limited visibility to a dozen feet, made moving around hazardous.

It's Murder She Says

(Jones, May 1945) Running time: 5:05

This is a tale told by a blowsy female mosquito, Anopheles Annie (voiced by Marjorie Rambeau). In her younger days, when she was svelte (for a mosquito), Annie was the toast of the world's hot spots. Cut to a montage of foreign scenes, showing her cavorting under signs saying Guadalcanal Zombie, Bombay Boilermaker, Bizerte Bombshell and Salerno Sling. As her casualty figures increased, the same "ologists" who were responsible for running her out of Panama start going after her. The boys have been wised up via Field Manuals, and start using netting and mosquito repellent (a drop of which makes Annie very ill). Then the Army Corps of Engineers starts to use oil, Paris Green, and other weapons, including the destruction of her hangouts, to run her out of her places. Annie becomes the haggard crone she is today. But in talking to a crowd of younger mosquito tarts, Annie notes that there

are still types like Snafu, who go around without clothes, and don't use Atabrine or repellent. Spotting Snafu walking by, the young mosquitoes go after him, leaving Annie to observe that as long as there are Snafus, a gal can still earn an honest living.

This cartoon was adapted from a field

manual prepared by Geisel and W. Munro Leaf, the author of *Ferdinand the Bull*. Whoever cast Rambeau was a genius, judging from Rambeau's entry in a recent film encyclopedia: "by the time she made Hollywood her home in the 30s, she was a middle-aged woman pegged for character roles, typically as blowsy aging harlots and fallen women." Along with *Payday*, this is another cartoon that makes a subdued reference to prostitution. As in *The Chow Hound*, the Army Corps of Engineers makes another appearance with their castle flag. See above under *Private Snafu vs. Malaria Mike* for a discussion of malaria and its existence in various parts of the world. Bizerte is in Tunisia, in North Africa, and Salerno is in Italy. Guadalcanal, of course, is in the South Pacific. Anopholes is one of the species of mosquito commonly associated with malaria.

Hot Spot

(Freleng, July 1945) Running time: 4:46

A series of gags that takes place in Iran. The Devil, not believing the reports of the heat in Iran, goes up to investigate for himself. Reading the descriptions of the heat in a guidebook (which he dismisses as Chamber of Commerce stuff), the Devil notes the hot conditions. Even a camel thinks it is hot in the furnace of the Middle East. The Allies arrive, to build facilities for the sending of supplies to Russia (the Devil noting that they work like the very...me!). The problems of road and train transit in Iran are shown, including the narrow roads (which Snafu drives off of) and the rockslides with the railroads. The Devil (who has been shedding his clothes and taking salt tablets), eventually heads back to Hell, where he meets the camel, who says, "I don't care what you say, I'm cool."

The camel's remarks are a throwback to some other animals in Avery cartoons, such as the thirsty camel in *Wacky Wildlife* (1940) and the cold polar bear in *Cross Country Detours* (1940). One reason the Devil may have had to resort to an atlas to find Iran was because it was only in 1935 that the name was officially changed from Persia. This is the only cartoon that refers to Russia in the whole series. Not, on the whole, a very good cartoon, as except for the bit about salt tablets, there is no real discussion of how to deal with heat, and many of the gags really are not terribly funny. The gags regarding the narrowness of the roads, the construction of port facilities (by the US Persian Gulf Commnd) and the mountainous train tracks are accurate; one stretch of the Iranian State Railway 163 miles long passed through 133 tunnels totaling 47 miles. Until the US sent diesel locomotives to Iran, sometimes steam locomotives would not be able to negotiate the steep grades, and would have to make two or three attempts to go through the tunnels. During the war, over 5.7 millions tons of war material, including 184,000 trucks that were vital to the Soviet war effort, went to Russia via Iran.

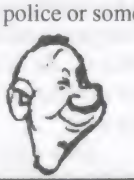
Operation Snafu

(Freleng, October 1945) Running time: 5:10

The cartoon (which is silent, except for a few brief bits of ersatz Japanese) opens with a scene at Japanese HQ. A high-ranking officer descends via elevators to a floor, and deposits a copy of secret war plans in a vault. (In a typical Freleng topper, he returns to brace a chair under the vault's door.) Snafu, somehow, is already in the vault, and takes the papers. The Japanese officer hears the alarm, and goes back to the vault, meeting Snafu. They bow to each other, and Snafu runs over the officer. The officer chases him over a bridge (quick cut to a Japanese newspaper announcing

the theft of the plans), and chases him into a geisha house. Snafu disguises himself as a geisha, complete with hair, fan and kimono. The general arrives to find him with two other geisha. Their little dance (to the strains of "Three Little Maids" from the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Mikado*) is applauded by the officer. The officer rejects the other two geisha, and picks Snafu. The officer reaches into the kimono where Snafu has hid the papers, causing him to slap the officer. The officer, using a mechanical mouse, gets Snafu to scream and jump into his arms. The officer then takes Snafu to a tribunal of three grave looking-chaps. Snafu bows to them and then uses their gavel to knock each of them, and then the officer, on the head. All four chase Snafu. Snafu traps the three panelists by bowing to them again, and slamming a door on their heads when they bow in return. Snafu escapes in a boat, thumbing his nose at the officer, who turns out to be a lot closer than he expects, and who eats the plans. Snafu stuffs him into a briefcase, and rows off.

One of two cartoons, along with *No Buddy Atoll*, where Snafu is more of a hero rather than a boob. This cartoon also reflects the trend toward the end of the series from lesson cartoons to more entertainment. As entertainment, certainly, it is a greatly enjoyable and funny cartoon. Note the second use of music from *The Mikado* here, along with *The Goldbrick*. It isn't clearly explained who the three panelists are; one has to guess they are secret police or some such similar organization.



No Buddy Atoll
(Jones, October 1945) Running time: 5:21

A mostly silent cartoon, this opens up with Snafu and a Japanese admiral singing, separately, the words to "Home Alone (By the Telephone)." (Snafu's verses are interrupted by a telephone call, consisting of Robert Bruce saying "Testing, Testing.") They spot a small island at the same time, and both race to it. In a nice bit of business, both head up a tree to search around, Snafu even handing the admiral his telescope. They realize something is up. Checking each other's dog tags, they realize that the other is an enemy. Going to their respective life rafts, they go through a lot of junk, the admiral pulling out a samurai sword, Snafu pulling out a Swiss army knife-like contraption. After getting various other implements (including Bruce's phone again), he gets an umbrella, which he uses to knock over the admiral. The admiral uses his sword to shred the umbrella and nick Snafu. Snafu retreats to his raft, puts on camouflage, and in a chase, eventually disappears into the foliage. The general tracks him first to a tree (which he chops down), and then to tall grass (which he mows down). Snafu, meanwhile, has stuffed his shirt with coconuts and, imitating a bomber, drops them on the admiral's head. Snafu hands the dazed admiral a phone, which is hooked up to an exploder. Snafu presses the plunger, we see an explosion, followed by Snafu sitting in front of a souvenir hut with the admiral's clothes, humming "Home Alone."

This cartoon features a few unusual musical bits, including a Japanese-like version of "Little Dog Lost," "Jingle Jangle," "Tiptoe Through the Tulips," and a brief snatch of "Peter's Theme" from *Peter and the Wolf*. One is surprised that Stalling never made use of the latter in his civilian cartoons. Another lessonless, but still enjoyable cartoon.

Going Home
(Jones, unreleased) Running time: 3:36

Snafu has returned home from war. As he gets off his train he jumps into the arms of his girlfriend (who doesn't look like the dark-haired Sally Lou from Tashlin's cartoons). Snafu then proceeds to talk all about various classified bits of information, such as how a flying, radar controlled bazooka (demonstrated in a newsreel) works, upcoming operations, the air bases connected with his unit, the 999th Division, upcoming operations, and the fact that his troop transports were unescorted. While jitterbugging with his girlfriend, a radio report indicates that because of leaks of restricted information, the entire 999th Division has been annihilated. Enraged, Snafu indicates that anybody responsible for the leakage of information should be run over by a streetcar. And Snafu is promptly run over.

One curious gaffe in the cartoon: in the billboard showing the division's airfield, the division is identified as the 99th Division, not the 999th. The streetcar gag was used both before (Freleng's 1941 cartoon *The Trial of Mr. Wolf*) and after (Freleng's 1951 cartoon *His Hare Raising Tale*). Tralfaz, a word used in other cartoons (e.g., 1962's *Fish and Slips*), makes an early appearance here as a part in the bazooka. Note also the use of bobrick. The cartoon also refers to Hideki Tojo, who was Prime Minister and War Minister for much of the World War II period for Japan.

Secrets of the Caribbean
(Jones, unreleased) Running time: N/A

I was not able to review this cartoon. Beck and Friedwald describe it as follows: Private Snafu, stationed in the Caribbean to protect the Panama Canal from the enemy meets the local Flora (a beautiful island girl), is beaten by giant insects, and is attacked by howler monkeys and carnivorous plants.

The introduction to the Bosko Video collection notes that, in response to contract padding by Leon Schlesinger (hardly unlikely), the Army farmed out a few Snafu cartoons to other units. What follows is a brief description of the non-WB Snafu cartoons.

A predecessor of UPA produced two entries in the *A Few Quick Facts* series that used Snafu. One, directed by Osmond Evans in 1944, explains the inflationary effects of soldiers using their huge purchasing power in areas where they are stationed, and advises them to save their money for their future. Snafu does not speak in the cartoon, and is only used in a few shots in this two minute cartoon. Zack Schwartz used more of Snafu in a highly stylized short on fear in 1945. The cartoon refers to the knights of old, and the notion that they were scared of nothing. Snafu turns out to be the knight, and he and his horse run when confronted by a dragon. The short explains how the body reacts to fear, and counsels soldiers on how to use fear to work for, rather than against one. Chuck Jones worked, on a moonlighting basis, with UPA to produce a campaign film for Franklin Roosevelt's 1944 reelection bid, *Hell Bent for Election*, which may explain one connection to UPA. Schwartz, an ex-Disney man, would later, in the Fifties, testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, causing much resentment among fellow artists.

In a bit of irony, Rudy Ising (who as noted above ran FMPU's animation department), who had been one of the founders of the WB studio in 1930, produced one cartoon released in 1946, *Private Snafu Presents Seaman Tarfu*, which was directed by George Gordon. (Tarfu has apparently got a transfer from his carrier pigeon job.) The cartoon is a series of spot gags about Navy life and life aboard a battleship. The gags include automatic deck cleaners, piping the admiral aboard, the use of weather forecasting equipment (the dopey weatherman uses one of those old fashioned mechanical gizmos showing people coming in and out of doors), diapering gulls to keeping them from messing the deck, tattoos, and the Navy tradition of beards. The cartoon has a running gag with a sailor who is chasing after a knockout blonde. The punchline at the end is that the sailor runs into Snafu, who notes that the Army made the picture, and goes off with the dame.

An additional Snafu cartoon, *How to Get a Fat Jap Out of a Cave*, (a/k/a *Mop Up*) was in production at MGM, using Tex Avery's unit in 1945. At the time of the surrender, the artwork was complete and needed only to be filmed. However, the Army took the drawings away, and no artwork is known to have survived. The Bosko Video collection also makes reference to another, canceled, cartoon called *The Tuscarosa*, though it does not supply any details beyond that it was cancelled in 1944 and would have introduced Tarfu.

The Mr. Hook Cartoons

Take Heed, Mr. Tojo
(Uncredited, 1943) Running time: 7:11

The cartoon opens up in 1953, in Anytown, U.S. Hook's house is on Easy Street, and has a helicopter parked in the driveway. Hook, by now a father, is awoken by his young son with a toy machine gun. The father splutters that he wasn't scared a bit, and goes on to recount how he shot down a Zero during the war without any weapons. Snafu delivers a message to the commanding officer of his carrier that a Japanese plane has been spotted, and a strike force is launched. The Japanese plane comes out of a cloud, and strafes Hook. Hook dives into a room full of war bonds, with posters that say that war bonds are ammunition. Hook loads a plane with war bonds and, fortifying himself with a book of instructions on how to fly, takes off after the Japanese pilot. The Japanese initially has the upper hand, using jujitsu to tie Hook and his plane in knots, and chases him underwater. The Japanese also spins Hook's plane with his wing, and bops his head with his landing gear. Finally, Hook remembers his bonds, and flings them out, covering the Zero. A strong gust from Hook's plane takes the fuselage off the Zero, causing it to crash on a tiny island, where the only remnant of the Japanese is his chattering teeth. Hook then tells his son that war bonds were responsible for the house, the helicopter, and in fact, if it wasn't for war bonds, you wouldn't be here. The son slyly informs his shocked father that that isn't how he heard it.

Portions of this cartoon, particularly the flying scenes, are very similar to certain earlier Popeye anti-Japanese cartoons, including *Scrap*

the Japs (Kneitel, 1942). This would be the only color entry in either the Snafu or the Hook series.

The Return of Mr. Hook
(McKimson(?), 1945) Running time: 3:45

On board the USS California (which is the only battleship bathed in sunshine), Hook comes out of the war bond office, to the jeers of his poker-playing shipmates. Snafu tells them of his plans, after the war is over. Cut to montage of newspaper headlines showing the war is over. Hook races off his ship to the first thing he wants to do. No, it's not the burlesque theater he passes, but the clothing shop, where changes first (mistakenly) into a Superhook outfit, and then a suit. He then (to the tune of "When My Dreamboat Comes Home") calls his girlfriend, to whom he rushes over to see and propose marriage. He then shops for a home (which is literally a stone's throw from the station) and a bed (which is bouncy enough for Snafu, though he indicates that the sign that reads we stand behind every bed is out). He marries his girlfriend, carriers her across the portal, and then raises a number of little ones (all of whom look like Hook). Hook finishes his little speech, to discover his shipmates have post war plans, too. "Singing Any Bonds Today?," they sign up for war bonds, too.

"Any Bonds Today?," written by Irving Berlin, was also used in the 1942 cartoon sometimes referred to as the *Bugs Bunny Bond Rally*. The USS California was indeed a real battleship, and was one of the battleships repaired after it was damaged at Pearl Harbor. If my attribution to McKimson is correct, this would mark one of his earliest projects, as well as his only black-and-white cartoon.

The Good Egg
(Jones (?), 1945) Running time: 3:01

Hook is sleeping on his ship, when a little evil Hook, discovering a war bond in Hook's bed, wakes him up, trying to convince him to cash in the bond. A little angelic Hook tries to counter this. Initially, the devil has the upper hand, smacking the angel and breaking his halo. The angel gets revenge, smacking the devil back, replacing his halo, and then hitting the devil through a convenient porthole. The angel then turns to Hook and demonstrates, by reaching into a nest egg, what kinds of things await Hook if he saves his money, such as civvies (with a sailor's hat, which the flustered angel quickly replaces with a civilian model), spending money, and a new house (with an outhouse, which again flusters the angel). A stork pops up, and the (again) flustered angel pushes it back in the egg, saying that that will come later (to the blushes of Hook). The cartoon closes with the angel bursting out of the egg (and held by the stork), telling sailors to call for their war bond officer.

This cartoon should not be confused with a similarly titled early cartoon of Jones', made in 1939. The closing gag is a parody of the cigarette ads for "Call for Philip Morris," which is clearly indicated by the bellboy outfit the angel wears. The angel also mimics Red Skelton's "Mean Widdle Kid" character when he says, "oooh, you bwoke my widdle halo."

Tokyo Woes
(Clampett, 1945) Running time: 4:07

The cartoon opens at a Tokyo broadcasting house, where, after a burst of ersatz Japanese, an announcer introduces Tokyo Rose. Tokyo Rose (who has been interrupted in the toilet) comes out, seemingly a delicate Japanese maiden. As soon as she gets to the microphone,

Take Heed, Mr. Tojo

however, she becomes a jive-talking, toothy Japanese bobbysoxer (quick shot of bobbysocks like clogs). After reeling off a quick list of records she's going to play, she introduces someone who purports to be from Brooklyn NY, Private Sad Sack. Really a Japanese announcer, Sad Sack indicates how much he likes Japan, and how he eats nothing but peaches and cr...peaches and cr..pie a la mode and drinks nothing but Rum and Coca-Cola, making like one of the Andrews Sisters. Hook, who is stuffing war bonds into a a piggy bank, hears Tokyo Rose braying about what good will war bonds do, stuffs a mop into the radio microphone, temporarily muzzling her, and, stuffing a war bond into a shell, fires it at Tokyo. The shell enters the broadcast studio, and out pops a little anthropomophric war bond, who tells Tokyo Rose "Greetings from Uncle Sam's Navy/ Whose intentions are really quite plain/We're sending you more of these presents/Again and again and again." The bond stuffs Rose's arm full of bombs, gets her to sign for it, thumbs his nose, and goes off. So do the bombs, leaving the announcer, Sad Sack and Rose as nothing but teeth, hair and glasses. The scene switches back to Hook, who is told by the narrator that after that war, the shell will return to him. Hook quickly digs a hole, but the little bond recognizes Hook from his tush. The bond says that Hook has to be fixed up with a few new things, including civvies (though the bond accidentally gives Hook a pair of breasts, which he removes), spending mazuma [money], and a new car. The bond then ponders what else Hook will need. Hook, his eyes popping at something off screen, knows what he wants, and he can get it himself. A sexy dame strolls by, Hook (wolf-like) howls, "Howwwold is she?," and ends up in Lovers' Lane with the dame, pulling down a shade.

There is no question that this is a Clampett cartoon: the speed, the rubbery animation and the love of crude jokes all mark this as a Clampett product, one of his last for WB. It gives one an idea of the kind of cartoons Clampett might have produced without the Hays Office looking over his shoulder. The "how old is she" gag turns up in other Clampett cartoons, such as *Book Revue* (1946) and *The Big Snooze* (1946). Tokyo Rose (real name: Iva Ikuo Toguri d'Aquino) was a Japanese-American who broadcast English-language propaganda to Allied troops during the war. She was tried and convicted of treason, but was released and eventually pardoned by Gerald Ford in January, 1977. (There is some question as to whether she was, in fact, the sole Tokyo Rose; there may have been as many as 20 persons who broadcast under the name, but only d'Aquino was ever tried in a US court.) The Sad Sack character was a character created by Mel Blanc (no apparent relation to George Baker's classic cartoon character) and used extensively during the war on Armed Forces Radio; the voice, as is obvious, is based to a certain extent on Porky Pig.

Eric Costello is a New York based writer and film historian. This is his first article for ANiMATO!, but not the last. Eric will launch a new regular column on animation history in the next issue of ANiMATO!

From Page 17

posite work, 2-D art and/or digital mattes. When the production began over a year ago at ILM a great deal of pre-production planning had already taken place. Artists had already designed the creatures and many of the other elements that ILM would work with. Before the animators got to work on the film the CG modelers had to turn the artists' concepts of what the aliens would look like into 3-D computer models. They sculpted the figures using Alias software on Silicon Graphics workstations.

At ILM the process of animating a sequence requires the animators to first block out the animation in rough low resolution studies. They use SoftImage software on Silicon Graphics workstations. These images are discussed with the lead character animators and with either David Andrews, the ILM animation supervisor or Jimmy Mitchell, the ILM special effects supervisor on *Mars Attacks!* The images are slowly refined at a low resolution. When they are finally approved they go to the technical directors who render them as high resolution images. The technical directors add the textures, color, lighting and other details including subtleties of natural phenomena including shadows, reflections and rain. Off-the-shelf software and proprietary ILM software was used to do the rendering, lip synchronization, facial expressions, rotoscope work and dozens of other special tasks. The rendering stage of an image is often a long slow process that requires changes and refinements until it is as perfect as possible and it gets its final approval.

The animators who spent most of 1996 working on *Mars Attacks!* are now working on other projects. Emberly is writing a training manual for new animators at ILM and will then work on *Spawn*, a feature based on a comic book about a hero who wears a cape and mask. Armstrong is working on *Jurassic Park: Lost Worlds*, the sequel to *Jurassic Park*. Dellarosa is working on *Men in Black* with Tommy Lee Jones and will soon be working on *Jurassic Park: Lost Worlds*. He recently worked on the restoration of *Return of the Jedi*.

As for those Mars Attacks trading cards that you may have had as a kid, they are now valuable collectors items. According to the *Comic Buyer's Guide* a complete set of 55 Topps cards from 1962 in excellent condition is worth between $1600 and $1800. Individual cards are worth between $18 and $22. There are reprint sets available that were made in 1994 and Topps is releasing a new set of cards featuring color photos from the film. They will be in Topps' exclusive widevision format!

Karl Cohen is an animation historian who heads the San Francisco chapter of ASIFA, and is a frequent contributor to ANiMATO!

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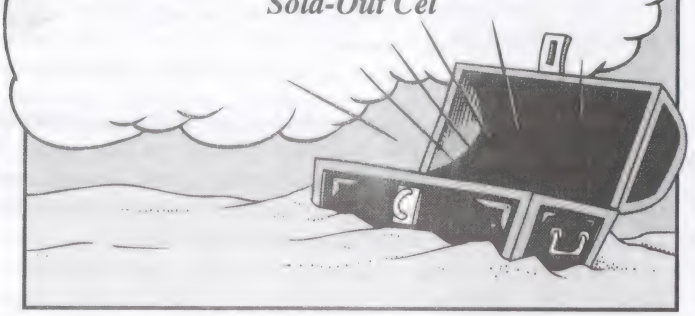

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Beginning his career in 1940 at Walt Disney Studios, Iwao started out as an apprentice on short subjects featuring Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy and Pluto. His Full-length feature film work at Disney included *Cinderella, Peter Pan, Lady and the Tramp* and *101 Dalmatians.*

For the past 35 years, Takamoto has been a guiding creative force at Hanna-Barbera©. In 1960, he joined the studio as a designer and layout artist for animated shows, advancing to the position of creative director where he served as the bridge between design and production. Iwao was the primary designer on such Hanna-Barbera© classics as *The Flintstones, Scooby Doo, Jonny Quest* and *Yogi Bear.* He had major involvement in the creation and design of *The Jetsons.* Virtually all the characters and cartoons released by Hanna-Barbera© over the past three decades have been touched by his artistry. Serving as the studio's vice president, creative design, Takamoto continues to lend his design talents and offer his guidance and sage advise to young animators.

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1996 ANiMATO! Film Poll

Compiled by Tim Smith from the votes cast by the readers of ***ANiMATO!***

The polls are closed, the votes have been tabulated, and the results can now be revealed. The 1996-97 **ANiMATO!** film poll features three new categories, three new winners in old categories, and five heavyweights who fought off all contenders to maintain their titles.

He may now be old enough now to collect social security, but Bugs Bunny was still frisky enough to hold onto the top spot as favorite character. Of course, the age factor may have worked to Bugs' advantage as his closest challenger Daffy Duck is three years older and looking forward to his 60th birthday on April 17th this year.

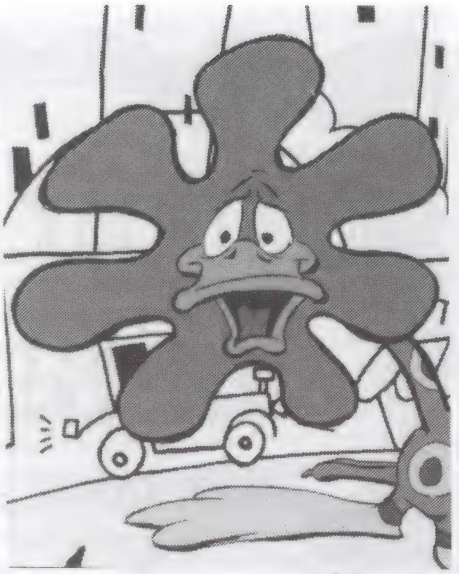
Daffy did, however, hold onto a #1 spot in the category of theatrical shorts as *Duck Amuck* once again edged out *What's Opera, Doc?* The other repeating champions were *Fantasia* for feature films, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* for TV specials, and *The Simpsons* for TV series.

The categories for directors, villains and independent shorts each crowned a new champion. Tex Avery snuck past Chuck Jones as favorite director, Boris Badenov usurped the throne of villainy, and *The Wrong Trousers,* which had not been commercially released at the time of our previous polling, rose to the top of the category for independent shorts.

New additions to the **ANiMATO!** poll this time around are categories for voice artists, animators, and anime. The Man of a Thousand Voices, the late Mel Blanc, was the overwhelming choice in his field and Preston Blair posthumously took the honors as favorite animator.

Finally, taking the checkered flag and heading for the winner's circle in the field of anime is *Speed Racer,* an old favorite from the sixties which has recently been exposed to a whole new generation.

And now, without further delay, here are the results:



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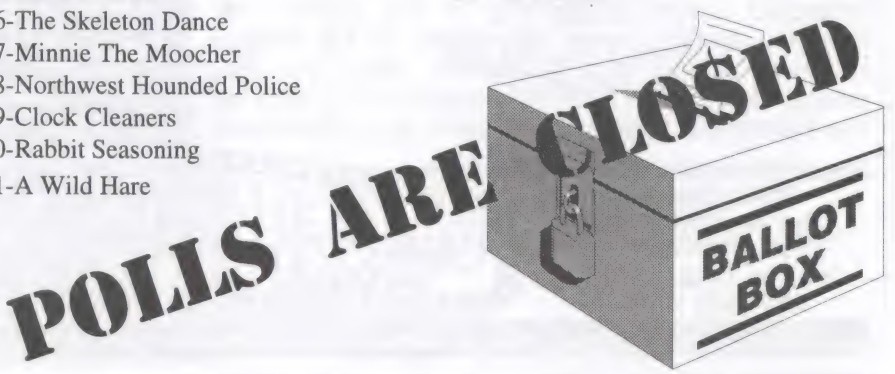
THEATRICAL SHORTS

1 - Duck Amuck
2 - What's Opera, Doc?
3 - Little Rural Riding Hood
4 - The Band Concert
5 - Coal Black an' de Sebben Dwarfs
6 - Bad Luck Blackie
7 - Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century
8 - Snow White
9 - One Froggy Evening
10-Popeye Meets Sinbad the Sailor
11-Red Hot Riding Hood
12-The Great Piggy Bank Robbery
13-Gertie the Dinosaur
14-Der Fuehrer's Face
15-Duck! Rabbit! Duck!
16-Rabbit of Seville
17-Steamboat Willie
18-Gerald McBoing Boing
19-Porky in Wackyland
20-King Size Canary
21-The Three Little Pigs
22-Superman
23-Bimbo's Initiation
24-Cat Concerto
25-The Old Mill
26-The Skeleton Dance
27-Minnie The Moocher
28-Northwest Hounded Police
29-Clock Cleaners
30-Rabbit Seasoning
31-A Wild Hare

INDEPENDENT SHORTS

1 - The Wrong Trousers
2 - Creature Comforts
3 - Technological Threat
4 - The Big Snit
5 - The Cat Came Back
6 - Your Face
7 - The Man Who Planted Trees
8 - Bambi Meets Godzilla
9 - Tin Toy
10-Lupo the Butcher
11-The Great Cognito
12-Frog Baseball
13-Push Comes to Shove
14-Quasi at the Quackadero
15-The Snowman
16-Charade
17-25 Ways to Quit Smoking
18-Luxo Jr.
19-Special Delivery
20-A Grand Day Out
21-Mona Lisa Descending a Stair Case
22-25 Ways to Stop Smoking
23-Crac
24-Snowman
25-Pas a Deux



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FEATURE FILMS

1 - Fantasia
2 - Yellow Submarine
3 - Pinocchio
4 - Toy Story
5 - Aladdin
6 - Beauty and the Beast
7 - The Nightmare Before Christmas
8 - Who Framed Roger Rabbit
9 - The Lion King
10-The Little Mermaid
11-101 Dalmatians
12-Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
13-Dumbo
14-Watership Down
15-Bambi
16-Peter Pan
17-Fritz the Cat
18-Lady and the Tramp
19-Akira
20-Sleeping Beauty
21-The Jungle Book
22-The Secret of N.I.M.H.
23-Cinderella
24-The Great Mouse Detective
25-Allegro Non Troppo
26-An American Tail
27-Lord of the Rings
28-Alice in Wonderland
29-The Land Before Time
30-FernGully
31-Wizards
32-The Tune
33-Heavy Traffic
34-Mr. Bug Goes To Town
35-Lensman

CHARACTERS

1 - Bugs Bunny
2 - Daffy Duck
3 - Popeye
4 - Goofy
5 - Homer Simpson
6 - Tasmanian Devil
7 - Bullwinkle J. Moose
8 - Felix the Cat
9 - Mickey Mouse
10-Betty Boop
11-Pinky & the Brain
12-Babs Bunny
13-Fred Flinstone
14-The Tex Avery Wolf
15-Yakko, Wakko & Dot Warner
16-Donald Duck
17-Scooby Doo
18-Ren & Stimpy
19-Wallace & Gromit
20-Marvin the Martian
21-Yosemite Sam
22-Droopy
23-Foghorn Leghorn
24-Pink Panther
25-Yogi Bear
26-Bart Simpson
27-Tom & Jerry
28-Woody Woodpecker
29-Tweety
30-Jack Skellington
31-Elmer Fudd
32-Mighty Mouse
33-Sylvester
34-Buzz Lightyear
35-Duckman

TELEVISION SERIES

1 - The Simpsons
2 - The Bullwinkle Show
3 - Animaniacs
4 - Batman: The Animated Series
5 - The Flintstones
6 - Ren & Stimpy
7 - George of the Jungle
8 - Gargoyles
9 - Tiny Toon Adventures
10-Duckman
11-Pinky & the Brain
12-The Tick
13-Beavis & Butt-Head
14-ReBoot
15-Freakazoid
16-Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures
17-Dr. Katz
18-Beany & Cecil
19-Duck Tales
20-Jonny Quest
21-TaleSpin
22-Scooby Doo
23-The Jetsons
24-Rocko's Modern Life
25-Speed Racer
26-Yogi Bear
27-Earthworm Jim
28-Garfield
29-Darkwing Duck
30-Taz-Mania
31-Kimba the White Lion
32-Chip 'n Dale's Rescue Rangers
33-Alvin Show
34-Astro Boy
35-Fat Albert

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VOICE ARTISTS

1 - Mel Blanc
2 - June Foray
3 - Daws Butler
4 - Tress MacNeille
5 - Jack Mercer
6 - Jim Cummings
7 - Clarence Nash
8 - Rob Paulsen
9 - Don Messick
10-Kathy Soucie
11-Jackson Beck
12-Frank Welker
13-Mae Questel
14-Jess Harnell
15-Robin Williams
16-Arthur Q. Bryan
17-Billy West
18-Dan Castellaneta
19-Arnold Stang
20-Jim Backus

TELEVISION SPECIALS

1 - How the Grinch Stole Christmas
2 - A Charlie Brown Christmas
3 - It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown
4 - Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
5 - A Wish for Wings That Work
6 - Santa Claus is Coming to Town
7 - The Family Dog
8 - A Christmas Carol
9 - The Tiny Toons Spring Break Special
10-The Simpsons Christmas Special
11-Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol
12-Will Vinton's Claymation House of Horrors
13-Tales From the Dark Side
14-Tiny Toons Spring Break Festival
15-Rikki Tikki Tavi
16-A Claymation Christmas
17-A Doonesbury Special
18-Frosty the Snowman
19-Horton Hears a Who
20-It's a Wonderful Tiny Toons Christmas

VILLAINS

1 - Boris Badenov
2 - The Tex Avery Wolf
3 - Cruella DeVil
4 - Natasha Fatale
5 - Wile E. Coyote
6 - Bluto
7 - Yosemite Sam
8 - The Grinch
9 - Dick Dastardly\
10-Snidely Whiplash
11-Chernobog
12-Captain Hook
13-Stromboli
14-Dishonest John
15-Maleficent
16-Montgomery Burns
17-Scar
18-Wicked Queen (Snow White)
19-Oil Can Harry
20-Sideshow Bob

For a comparison to past ANIMATO! Film Polls, we present the results from three different years:

1986: Feature Film

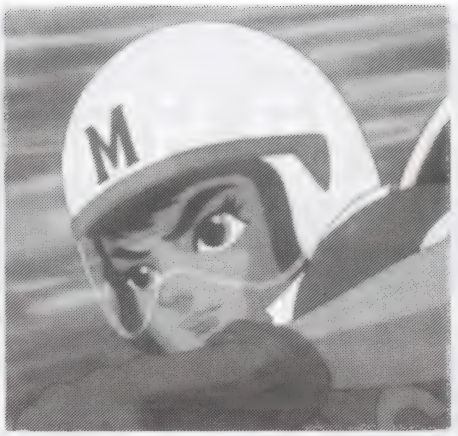
1. Yellow Submarine
2. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
3. Fantasia
4. Bambi
5. The Secret of NIMH
6. Watership Down
7. Pinocchio
8. 101 Dalmatians
9. Peter Pan
10. Allegro Non Troppo
11. The Black Cauldron
12. The Last Unicorn
13. Heavy Metal
14. The Hobbit
15. Wizards

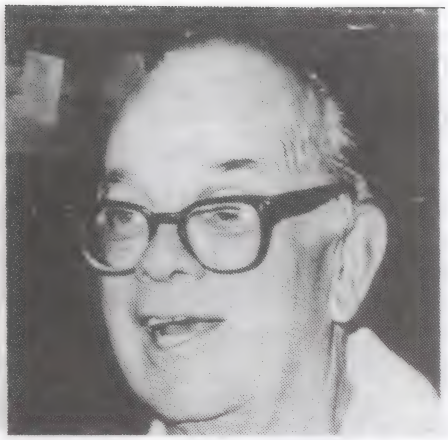
1987: Feature Film

1. Yellow Submarine
2. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
3. The Secret of NIMH
4. Fantasia
5. Pinocchio
6. Watership Down
7. Bambi
8. 101 Dalmatians
9. The Black Cauldron
10. Peter Pan
11. Wizards
12. Castle of Cagliostro
13. Heavy Metal
14. The Hobbit
15. The Last Unicorn

1988: Feature Film

1. Fantasia
2. Yellow Submarine
3. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
4. Pinocchio
5. Secret of NIMH
6. Bambi
7. Allegro Non Troppo
8. Watership Down
9. 101 Dalmatians
10. Rock & Rule
11. Wizards
12. Who Framed Roger Rabbit
13. Heavy Metal
14. Dumbo
15. Peter Pan





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ANIMATORS

1 - Preston Blair
2 - Rod Scribner
3 - Bill Tytla
4 - Otto Messmer
5 - Myron Waldman
6 - Glen Keane
7 - Grim Natwick
8 - Winsor McCay
9 - Ub Iwerks
10-Andreas Deja

ANIME

1 - Speed Racer
2 - Akira
3 - Kimba the White Lion
4 - Sailor Moon
5 - Lensman
6 - My Neighbor Totoro
7 - Astro Boy
8 - Project A-Ko
9 - Robotech
10-Robot Carnival

DIRECTORS

1 - Tex Avery
2 - Chuck Jones
3 - Bob Clampett
4 - Bill Hanna/Joe Barbera
5 - Friz Freleng
6 - Osamu Tezuka
7 - Dave Fleischer
8 - Robert McKimson
9 - Don Bluth
10-Hayao Miyazaki

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From Page 19

voice narrating Lantz's 1941 *Mother Goose on the Loose.* Other 1940's mimics followed, like Freberg, Walter Craig and the versatile Paul Frees, but none of them enjoyed a showcase like *Hollywood Steps Out.*

As the 1940's made way for the new decade, vocal imitations in animation were slowly phased out in favor of the slicker, personality based cartoons starring strong characters like Droopy, Tom and Jerry, Woody Woodpecker and the great Warner menagerie.

Of course there were exceptions to the rule - as late as 1956, the Bugs Bunny entry *Wideo Wabbit* featured impersonations of Groucho Marx and Art Carney, via the talented larynx of Daws Butler.

By the mid 1950's voice mimicry had evolved into a new form when the skill was employed for the many TV cartoon shows begat by Hanna Barbera's *Ruff and Reddy.* Actors like Daws Butler and Paul Frees (who had in fact both been youthful impressionists in mid-west nightclubs in the late 1930's) used their flair for imitation, allied with their facility as expert radio actors, and began using celebrity takeoffs as the basis for "original" TV characters.

Frees based his innumerable voices heard on Jay Ward's *Bullwinkle Show* on movie and radio actors. His Boris Badenov was a broad take on the Balkan character actor Akim Tamiroff, while Dudley Do-Right's plummy superior Inspector Fenwick was an uncanny rendition of Eric Blore, the perennial butler in the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals like *Top Hat.*

Meanwhile, over at Hanna-Barbera, Daws Butler began a long and fruitful association with the studio by doing "broadened" impersonations for his starring roles. Thus, Wally Gator was really comedian Ed Wynn, Snagglepuss was just an exaggerated Bert Lahr from *The Wizard of Oz,* con-artist Hokey Wolf was Phil Silvers (alias Sergeant Ernie Bilko), Lippy the Lion was Joe E. Brown, and so on.

Of course this was nothing new: in the theatrical era, East Coast mimic Arthur Kaye did Ed Wynn's voice for the Terrytoons character Gandy Goose, while back in Hollywood, Bob McKimson asked Mel Blanc to adapt the Senator Claghorn voice from Fred Allen's radio show, for a certain blowhard Southern rooster.

What's never been recorded, until now, is the fact that New York radio actor Kenny Delmar (who "originated" Senator Claghorn), and Mel Blanc - the vocalizer behind Foghorn Leghorn - both knew that this voice had actually originated at KFWB, Warner's own radio station in Hollywood, back in the early 1930's as a character known as *The Sheriff.* This hard-of-hearing braggart, heard on pioneering Pacific Coast comedy shows like *Gilmore Circus* and *Sunday Night Hi Jinks* was the true template for both Foghorn and The Senator from Allen's Alley. It was created by radio and movie character actor Jack Clifford (who actually did some voice work for Disney in the 1930's). This column is dedicated to setting the record straight, and clearing up some long-time show biz legends with a dash of historical accuracy; and if, in the process, those legends become a little less fun, then so be it - all the uncredited artists covered herein have dwelt in unjust obscurity for decades. (Just wait until a future column in this series uncovers the real origins behind some other Warner 'toon' voices like Sylvester the Cat!)

Acknowledgments: My thanks this time to Mark Kausler, Graham Webb and Leonard Maltin for tapes of cartoons and films; to Ken Greenwald, Dave Siegel and Don Aston for supplying old-time radio shows; and to June Foray, Dave Barry and the late Daws Butler and Bob Clampett (via Hames Ware) for sharing their memories.

Keith Scott is not only a film and radio historian from Australia, he is also a voice artist himself. His Boris Badenov was heard in a Rocky and Bullwinkle battery commercial this year and in bumpers broadcast on the Cartoon Network.

From Page 11

niuses of the field is alive, well, and still very active. Jones is one of the few living links to what many of us refer to as the Golden Age of Animation. His voice in this book is the voice of a man who not only created, but created for a purpose. There are many artists and writers who have a hard time explaining why their art takes a particular form. Jones is able to talk about his influences and his reasons without sounding like an art critic or college professor.

Despite what you might think about his Uncle Lynn, this book is an essential part of any serious animation library. ***--GMD***

Audio Antics

Tall and Small Tales
by June Foray
Helion Audio Books

Veteran voice actress June Foray has written and co-produced this audio tape of her original stories for children aged three to eight. Listen carefully and you just might hear some variations on many of June's cartoon voices; is that Witch Hazel and Rocky the Flying Squirrel popping up in one story? June's tape has five stories which are long on imagination, whimsy, and innocence. In the cookie-cutter world of little kid entertainment, June's tape is a welcome diversion from the likes of Mickey Mouse and Barney. If you can't find the tape locally, contact:

Helion Audio Books,
859 N. Hollywood Way,
Suite 281,
Burbank, CA 91505. ***--GMD***

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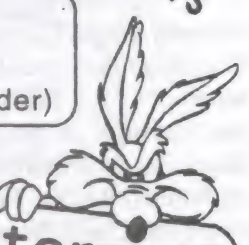

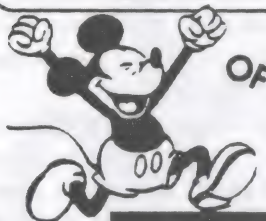

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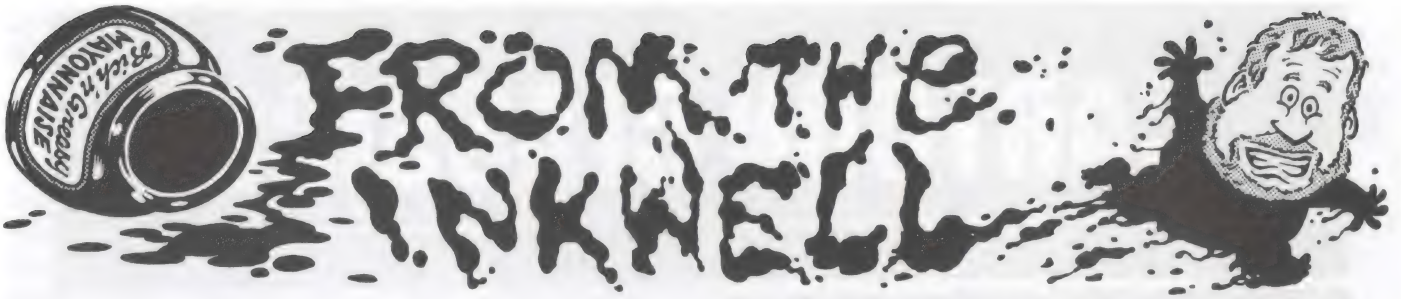

I love typos...not really!

And I made a biiiiiig one in the last issue. I spelled Craig Bartlett's name incorrectly all through the piece I did on *Hey! Arnold!* Don't blame Patrick or Gene. It was my error! My sincere apologies to a very nice guy who has created a great show.

A plea from the Internet...

The following was posted on the rec.arts.animation newsgroup, and I think should be of interest to every reader of **ANiMATO!...**

Hi, I'm Joe Alaskey. And I'm not really a duck. I just play a few on TV... I'm going to ask you all a small favor on behalf of Chuck Jones Productions. Recent cutbacks at Warners have led to discussions between WB and CJP regarding future financing. No one really wants to see the Chuck Jones shorts program brought to a halt. Negotiations are going on now with some success.

What can YOU do to help Chuck Jones Productions survive? You can SEND SNAILMAIL (a postcard or letter ONLY - NO E-MAIL, PLEASE!) to the Warners executives whose decision this will be. You can give your vote of confidence in Chuck's vision, your vote of trust in his artistic integrity, and of faith in his guidance in keeping the classic cartoons structures and characters alive. Corny, ain't it? But I mean it. This is your chance to show Chuck that you believe in his work - past, present and future.

I'm a VA [voice actor] . I was hired to do Sylvester for one short *Father of the Bird*, and it was an honor and career highlight for me. But I'm not asking for myself..... Well, not just for myself...

Seriously, Chuck's hand-picked animation team is at it day and night, trying their damnedest to deliver quality - and everyone there feels the quality is improving with each effort. There are plans for more cartoons - damn funny ones, from the storyboards I've seen - starring other classic WB characters - cartoons just waiting for the green light. In November '96, CJP wanted to release 6 a year starting in '97. Now they're discussing the possibility of even fewer releases. If you've supported Chuck's work in the past - anything from buying a cel all the way up to a belly-laugh, please help.

The bottom line: Wouldn't you rather have more Chuck Jones cartoons than not?

Write
(SNAILMAIL ONLY, PLEASE!) to:

Bob Daly or Terry Semel
(or both!)
Warner Bros.
4000 Warner Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91522

and/or to:

Gerry Levin
Time-Warner Inc.
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York City, NY 10019

Animation Boom or Bust?

Talk to people in the animation industry and things are looking up. *Space Jam*, a non-Disney animated feature (well okay, half-animated) did quite well at the box office. Other companies are readying features, and there seems to be more animated product on television than people can ever watch.

Then why are television broadcast execs worried and wondering if they should update their resumes? Because, according to the ratings, viewership of children's programming during Saturday morning is decreasing, and that means, animation.

At a time when more and more attention is being paid to animation, why are fewer kids watching it? Some people have theorized that the networks simply have to share the pie with too many. Afterall, not too long ago, there was just ABC, NBC, and CBS. Now NBC has dropped out, but Fox, WB and UPN have all arrived with their own children's product. Further dividing the viewing audience are the animated offerings on Nickelodeon, TNT, and, of course, The Cartoon Network. Kids have more choices and those choices are not just limited to Saturday morning timeslots.

Will this trend hurt the animation industry? It actually could improve it. The good shows will attract viewers, and if the networks are smart, they'll look at the kind of cross promotion that Fox, Nickelodeon and The Cartoon Network does to attract not only a kid audience, but also the animation-loving adults as well.

Adios Amigos!

With the publication of this issue of **ANiMATO!**, my association with the magazine is now over. I started as a contributor a long, long time ago (back in the days of the photocopied digest format); eventually was hired by the former publisher to edit the magazine, but wound up purchasing the magazine with Patrick in the late summer of 1992, and now...well, as they say in the theater, it's been a nice run. And as Snagglepuss would say, "Exit, stage right."

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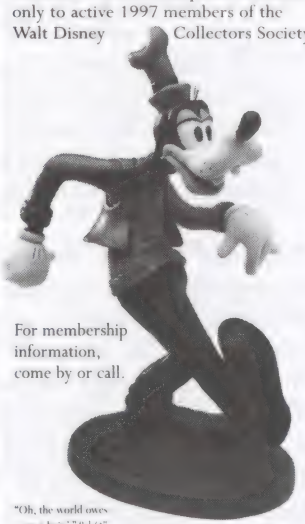

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In Memory Of Al Eugster

by Graham Webb & G. Michael Dobbs

Earlier this year the world of animation lost another veteran animator, Al Eugster. Whether *it's Donald Duck* wrestling with an inflatable rubber horse *Beach Picnic,* Gabby explaining to King Little about the "Man Mountain" outside his castle *Gulliver's Travels, Betty Boop, Popeye* or a host of other characters, Eugster's animation definitely stands out in a crowd.

Our story starts in 1925 when, at the tender age of sixteen, Eugster set out with every intention of becoming a strip cartoonist, and, had he not met animators George Cannata and Sid Garber at a New York art class, heaven knows what channel he might have been diverted along.

Garber and Cannata persuaded young Eugster to join them as an apprentice at the highly successfull Pat Sullivan Studio, where Felix the Cat was the order of the day. The thought of drawing cartoons professionally was the inspiration to prompt him to forsake his $19.00-a-week job as office boy at the American Radiator Co. and join Sullivan as a "blackener" for the much lower wage of $10.00 a week.

It started in 1925 with Felix the Cat, if you recall that. Otto Mesmer was in charge there and the studio was owned by Pat Sullivan. I was there for about four years until 1929, recalled Eugster.

Sullivan's studio consisted of just one large room with about ten animation desks, an animation camera, Pat Sullivan's office, and a staff of less than ten to handle inking, etc. The inking-in was Eugster's job. Felix was basically a black character, drawn on paper so that the backgrounds (inked on cel) could not disturb his movements too much. Any separate elements that were temporarily in a held position were also inked onto cels which were then placed over the drawings and photographed. In addition, any action that disturbed any lines on the linear background, those lines would be traced onto the drawings.

Armed with an ordinary brush and India Ink, Eugster often kept in practice by drawing little figures on the areas to be later "blackened."

The true brains behind Felix (and Pat Sullivan for that matter) was Otto Messmer, who had created Felix for Paramount [screen] Magazine way back in 1920 and Sullivan had been reveling in his success ever since.

Messmer was not only responsible for directing the films, but also for creating a story, doing the bulk of the animation as well as providing a daily and Sunday comic strip, and picking up the studio payroll every Friday. The daily strip was eventually taken off Messmer's hands by Jack Bogle in 1927, while he continued doing the Sunday strip.

Eugster was in good company while at Sullivan's, as a number of prominent, if not legendary animators filtered through as Messmer's second-in-command: Bill Nolan, George Stallings, Raoul Barré, Burt Gillett, Dana Parker and Hal Walker to name but a few. Messmer seemed quite content to remain in the shadow of Sullivan's limelight, as Sullivan's name was splashed over everything and Messmer rarely got a mention of any kind, even though he was running the studio.

During his tenure with the studio, Al's salary increased from his initial sum of a paltry $10.00 a week to a sumptuous $25.00 as he later elevated to being an inker. By the time Al left Sullivan's, the studio was phasing out, due to the preference of sound cartoons with audiences. Although they did resurface in 1930 by conceding and making a handful of Felixs' with added sound-track, but, sadly, not to any great effect, and the studio sank without trace.

By 1929, Eugster was climbing onwards and upwards by joining the famed Max Fleischer Studios, first starting as inker, then in-betweener, part-time animator, and then finally progressed to being a fully-fledged animator (a post he unfortunately never aspired to while with Sullivan.)

"In the spring of 1929, I went over to Fleischers. They were in Long Island City at the time, Eugster said....Rudy [Zamora} and I went from Pat Sullivan's studio on 63rd Street in Manhattan and walked over the Queensborough Bridge and applied for a job at Fleischers at Long Island City. We were met by Nellie Sanborn. She was Dave Fleischer's secretary. She asked us what we did and we told her we did inking and animating. We hadn't animated before, but we thought through observation we had some knowledge."

His first task as animator with Fleischer was a piece of history in itself, working on the very first Talkartoon, No*ah's Lark,* relating the tale of Noah's animals forsaking the Ark in favor of enjoying a funfair.

"Around the beginning of 1930, the animators on staff, just about all of them, decided to leave to go elsewhere. That left Max without an animation staff. Then we became instant animators; Rudy, myself, George Cannata, Jimmy [Shamus] Culhane and a few others. We were thrown right into it and we started animating with a contract. That was it. It worked out somehow!"

These first "Talkies" were more of a problem than the live-action films, as the dialogue was recorded after the animation was completed. All the animators had to work from was a roughly timed-out exposure sheet. This method, plus the new experience of animating mouth movements gave cause for the characters to have grossly over-exaggerated mouthings while talking or singing. On the other hand, the Bouncing Ball section of the Screen Songs were always pre-synched and all music and mouth exposure sheets compiled by the musical director, Lou Fleischer, rather than the film's director who would tend to those matters today.

Al Eugster's itchy feet took him, once again, from Fleischer's and, in 1932, found himself heading for Charles Mintz's Studio in California. Mintz had recently moved West himself, and was enjoying a

mild success with his cartoons featuring Krazy Kat, giving cause for the studio to be sometimes called the "Krazy Kat Studios."

Mintz had gained a notoriety through being the man who stole Oswald the Rabbit from Walt Disney; needless to say that move did Disney a lot more good than it did Mintz. Eugster enjoyed working for Mintz and, by all accounts, so did most of his staff as he gave them a free hand to do what they wanted, earning him the nickname of "Good Time Charlie."

Although Mintz was quite near the bottom of the list of companies following in Disney's wake, he kept a steady keel, turning out much the same product right up to his death at the end of the decade.

From 1933 to 1935, Al's travels took him to yet another legendary studio..UB Iwerks'. It was here he teamed up again with his old chum from the Fleischer days, Shamus Culhane, where they joined forces to direct the Comicolor Cartoons (Iwerks' answer to Disney's Silly Symphonies).

Iwerks was yet another Otto Messmer figure, in fact the man behind Mickey Mouse, lured away from Disney by producer Pat Powers in the hope of breaking Walt.

Had he lured Messmer from Sullivan, he might have succeeded, but although Disney was heartbroken that Iwerks could leave him for money alone, he carried on from strength to strength while Ub and his studio floundered about in the open market, not making much impression.

The Iwerks studio was another cramped affair, like Sullivan's, only this was chock-full of machinery and overcrowded with a handful of animators. Iwerks himself, handled anything that was dragging in production from animation to layouts although his true ideals lie in tinkering about with mechanical inventions such as the Multiplane Camera.

Eugster's wanderlust took him further afield, once again. This time to the legendary Walt Disney Studios, where he was given the position of animating Donald Duck in a number of shorts.

His crowning glory came when Disney asked him to help animate some scenes on his forth-coming full length feature cartoon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* Al was helped into the studio by former Iwerks story man, Otto Englander, who arranged him an interview with Walt Disney.

Here he animated on one of the scenes that unfortunately ended up on the cutting-room floor, due to it slowing the pace of the overall picture. This consisted of the Dwarfs building an ornate, wood-carved bed for Snow White...a scene that never got past the pencil stage.

Al also animated on two isolated scenes that were survivors in the finished product: The Dwarfs' first appearance in the film, in long-shot of them digging in their diamond mine, plus a scene near the end where the birds are warning Dopey of the dangers that are befalling Snow White. He shoos them away, but they finally manage to drag him out of the scene by his coat tails.

By 1939, Eugster had returned to the Fleischer Studios, this time they had moved to Florida and were heavily into production of their answer to Snow White, *Gulliver's Travels.*

Al was given most of the plum scenes including Gabby and King Little discussing what to do with the man-mountain, their getting peppered by King Bombo's armada and Gulliver's befriending them...excluding the animation of Gulliver, himself, which was done by another animator. Such was his success on Gulliver, Al was offered a key role in their next feature, *Mr. Bug Goes to Town,* that of animating the hero and the villains.

The Eugsterisms chiefly concern Hoppity and Honey (Al's animation doesn't include the character of Honey Bee) leaving to go to a night club, right up to the villains, Swat the Fly and Smack the Mosquito relating to Mr. Beetle just what occurred there.

Another shorter scene depicted the insects telling (in rhyming verse) that the fence dividing the humans from the bugs has been knocked down.

The Fleischer Studios ceased operation in the spring of 1942 when Max Fleischer lost control of his business to his distributor, Paramount Pictures. With the departure of Max and Dave Fleischer (Dave had resigned to head up Columbia's Screen Gems animation shop), Paramount named the studio after their music publishing division, Famous Music. Famous soon moved back to New York, taking all the staff with it, run by Max's son-in-law, Seymour Kneitel along with his two partners, Izzy Sparber and Sam Buchwald. The studio continued to function, under the name of Famous Studios, from 1942 up until 1956 when it was reorganized by Paramount and retitled as Paramount Cartoons.

However, greater things were brewing in the pot, and Al Eugster suddenly found himself drafted into the U.S. Army, amid World War II.

Never one to let the grass grow under his feet, Al did manage to supplement his Army pay by drawing a limited amount of Funny Animals comic book work under the non de plume of "Eugie."

After this interruption, Eugie returned to Famous and settled down to animate Popeye, Herman and Katnip and various oddments for the next decade.

In 1957, he left Paramount to animate something like two-hundred TV commercials on a free-lance basis, until he returned in 1964 after Seymour Kneitel's death.

Although nothing too outstanding was produced during the next three years until the Studio's finale, a word should be said for his work on Shamus Culhane's *My Daddy the Astronaut,* which was animated very cleverly as a child's scribble, definitely not the first, but certainly the best of it's kind.

After his tenure through a succession of producers at Paramount, Al secured a staff job with the Kim-Gifford Studio, animating about 235 TV commercials and longer films for Con-Edison, Medex and 14 three-minute School House Rock Cartoons.

After the closure of this studio, Al Eugster continued into the 1980's. His last years were spent in a nursing home.

In retrospect Al Eugster's illustrious career might never have been had he not been persuaded to join Pat Sullivan, and the viewing populous might have been deprived of some terrific animation on the screen.

Graham Webb is an animation historian from Great Britain and has contributed numerous articles to ANiMATO!

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IN THE WORKS...

~ Intrepid British correspondent Andrew Osmond is tracking Nick Park on his home turf for an interview.

~ Wendy Hall has completed an interview with Jan Svankmajer.

~ Glenn Anton has a double interview with Bob Givens and Pete Alvarado.

~ Judy Reboy is chatting with Chip Duffy and Michael Ouweleen: On Air Department at the Cartoon Network.

~ Chuck Miller has filed a "round table" discussion with Jem, Boo-Boo and Speed Racer.

~ Chuck Miller is also working on *Spicy Stories* and *Spawn.*

~ Harry McCracken is reprising his hilarious "Theme Parks: Ones That Didn't Make It" with various artists contributing graphics for each segment.

~ Beth Thomas has filed Arthur & Aurora: An Archtypal Analysis of *Sleeping Beauty.*

~ David Krell is doing an overview of Underdog. Sweet Polly Purebred fans can now rejoice!

~ David Bastian has the daunting task of covering the World Animation Celebration in Los Angeles.

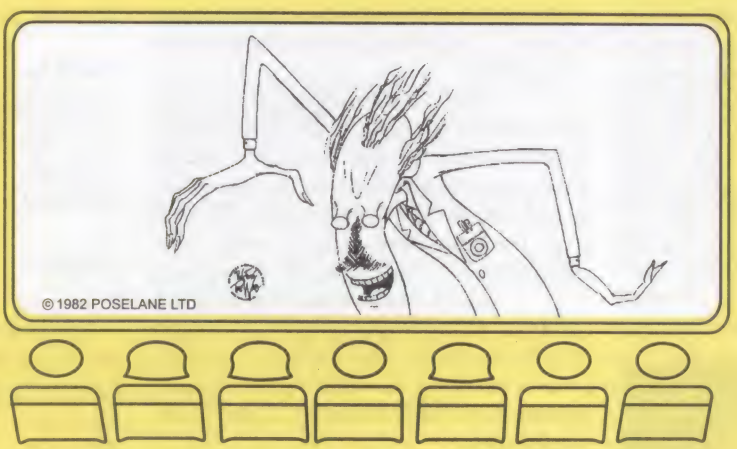
~ Jessie Nagel kicks off her regular section on Women In Animation.

~ Eric Costello will be doing a regular column on Animation History.

~ Jere Guldin's Animation Preservation column will focus on the original *Lost World*

~ Mark Hurley returns to the pages of ANiMATO! with his comic strip *Waldorf's Toon Tavern.*

~ Massive book review section, including guest reviewer Doug Ranney's insights on Stefan Kanfer's book *Serious Business* and a pile of books from and about Disney.



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SMURF THEME SONG UNEARTHED

by Nicolas Duquette
Feeding Hills, Massachusetts

At long last, the legendary Smurf theme song has been discovered, in its complete hour and a half length.

Smurf historians around the world, Smurfologists, are abuzz with the news that the theme song of the classic cartoon show has finally been found. Written by Liechtenstein citizens, composer John P. Smith and lyricist John J. Smith, the piece was originally recorded at a length of one hour and twenty-seven minutes by the Liechtenstein Symphony Orchestra and Choir. Its working title "*Little Blue Elves Skipping Happily Through the Forest Until a Cat Gets Them* was discarded in favor of the shorter *The Smurf Song,* and the recording was reduced down to the twenty-second bit used to open the show.

"It was amazing," said John W. Smith, the producer that hired the famous Smith/Smith team to write the song. "P. Smith was already on some kind of drugs, and he started taking LSD just to get the proper theme of empty-headedness into the song. It worked, too. I was especially impressed with the bagpipe solo which we had to cut out for the sake of time.

"As for Johnny J., he worked himself up to a fever of 107.2 just getting those wonderful lyrics. He was hospitalized for days after writing them."

Many famous contemporary musicians were in the seats of the Liechtenstein Symphony Hall for that one fateful performance before an arsonist burned the place to the ground with half the orchestra inside. They've given *The Smurf Song* credit for many of the major decisions in their lives. For example:

John A. Smith, famous bagpipist - "I heard that bagpipe solo, and it just blew me away. I'd been playing the accordion, I'd thought I was a player of the world's most versatile instrument, but after that night, I played the bagpipe only."

Paul McCartney - "I've given the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* a lot of credit for influencing our *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album, but really, it was the Smurf Theme Song."

Jimmy Page - "I wish my skin was blue."

Though the Smith and Smith team died in Liechtenstein's jails for violating anti-brainwashing laws, and though the song is banned from radio airplay in a total of two hundred and twenty-three countries, over here in the U.S.A., it's a musical classic. While ANiMATO! magazine wouldn't give us the money (cheapskates) to include two CD's with each copy of the rough draft so we could let everyone hear this masterpiece, for the first time ever in any magazine, we present the entire lyrics to the song.

Verse 1

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!

Refrain:

La la la, la la la la!
Tra la la la la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!

Verse 2

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 3

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 4

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 5

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 6

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 7

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 8

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 9

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 10

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 11

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 12

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 13

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 14

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 15

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 16

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 17

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 18

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
la la la, la la la la la
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la la!
(Refrain)

Verse 19

Tra la la la la la, la la la la
Die, Gargamel, Die! Ha ha ha ha ha!
La la la la la la, la la la la la!
La la! Die!
(Refrain 3 Times)

(**Thelma Scumm** *From Page 72)*

would give me money to do whatever I wanted to, but they're not going to unless they can see a return on their investment.

OK, off the soapbox.

Hey, did you catch the Cartoon Network's April Fools joke? At midnight, they played the Avery Screwy Squirrel classic *Happy-Go-Nutty.* Then they played it again. Then again. And again! From 12 midnight to 6 am, the only thing seen on the Cartoon Network was *Happy-Go-Nutty.* Some viewers got mad and complained, but most people saw the humor in it. Mark Evanier, commenting on those who complained about it, said "The next time they run a *Laff-a-Lympics* marathon, I'm going to call up and demand they run *Happy-Go-Nutty* over and over for twelve hours instead."

Well, that's all I have room for this issue. Remember that I need your help to spread the word. Send me your gossip, care of ANiMATO! or email it to me at **ThelmaScum@aol.com.** You can also check out my web page at **http://members.aol.com/ThelmaScum**, where you can vote for your favorite animated films, get links to animation pages, and send messages to me!

So until next time, remember - If you can't say something nice about someone, come sit by me. ***- Thelma Scumm***

For more *Mulan* info, check out the Mulan FAQ at http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/5082/mulanfaq.html.

Hello, dearies! Yes, I'm back! No, I'm not going to tell you why I was away for so long, except to say that it is mere coincidence that I disappeared right when ANiMATO! got a new editor and reappeared right as he left. *Coincidence*, I tell you!

When ANiMATO! #1 first came out, we were thrilled when anything animated appeared. *Rock & Rule*, a mediocre film by any standards, was gobbled up as if it were manna from heaven. TV shows included *Pac Man*, *Rubik's Cube* and *Mr. T.* What a difference a decade makes! You young ones should appreciate all I've done for you by bringing animation into its second renaissance.

So what's the latest gossip in the world of animation?

Disney is getting ready for the premiere of its child *Hercules* which at first glance looks more like the illegitimate offspring of UPA and Warner Brothers. It was one thing when a genie said a few anachronistic things (a *few?*) but when the entire cast does it, it might get, well, dated very quickly. But then again, does the Disney company care any more? Hype the film, rush the video, and years later, kids will still be buying them no matter how bad. Hey, they still buy Robin Hood don't they? (The only film Disney is trying to delete from its memory is *Black Cauldron.*)

Next summer's Disney film, *Mulan* is a definite break for the studio. In case you don't know, it takes place in ancient China and is all about a woman disguised as a man. Can't you just see the sales pitch? "It's *Victor/Victoria* meets *The Last Emperor!* The music is *not* by Alan Menken which is a definite down in my book, and it's directed by two new (for Disney) directors. We shall see.

Another project in the Disney lineup is *Fantasia '99.* Now you can be lulled to sleep into the new millenium! You know, I always thought *Fantasia* was like PBS and broccoli. When polled, people say "Oh yeah, Fantasia, greatest animated film ever made, I watch it all the time, it's good for me." But when they get home, they put *Aladdin* or *Toy Story* on the VCR. I know I do. To me, what makes a movie, *any* movie, is the script. I can't sit through two hours of special effects if I don't care about the story or characters. Now don't get me wrong - *Fantasia* is a wonderful work of art - but I prefer entertainment.

I'm looking forward to Disney's version of *Tarzan,* animated by one of the greatest animators of our time, Glen Keane (who did the Beast, Ariel, Aladdin and Pocahontas)! The only problem with this production is that the music will be done by Phil Collins, which is only a step above Elton John in the category *blandness.* To me, one of the things I have loved in recent Disney films is Menken's music, which flows out of the stories and runs with the film, pushing the story along instead of stopping it dead for a song like so many other so-called *musicals.* I haven't stopped watching *Hunchback* yet, which I think musically is one of the best. It's almost like an opera at times!

From what I've seen of Fox's *Anastasia* it should be called *Rotoscopia.* Why animate a film if it just looks like a traced live action film? OK, OK, there are some typical cute talking animal sidekicks, which in a film that looks this realistic stand out as macabre abberations. I'm much more interested in the feature film version of *The Tick.* Spoon!

Ren and Stimpy creator John Kricfalusi recently announced that one of his new projects would be new Yogi Bear and Ranger Smith cartoons. *Oh boy!* exclaimed *Hunchback* director Kirk Wise. "Will they fart a lot? Will there be lotsa veiled masturbation jokes?" Kricfalusi cult members reacted accordingly, circling the wagons around their idol, and pointing out that once, in a 100 minute movie, one of Kirk's characters said "cut the cheese." Horrors!

This brings me to a topic that I would like to discuss and beat into the ground if I may: The Tortured Genius syndrome.

Let's take three examples and for simplicity's sake, let's call them Mike Jittlov, John Kricfalusi, and Richard Williams. There is no doubt that each of these men has more talent than 99% of the people who make the crap that comes out of the various animation studios, but each has yet to live up to their potential. Why? Could it possibly be because of some flaw in their character? No, of course not; it has to be someone else's fault! It's those damned Hollywood money men! They are conspiring to prevent you and I from seeing the wonderful work these men have for us!

Kricfalusi's complaints have been heard over and over again, as he has been fired from just about every job he's ever had because he can't get the projects done on time; Jittlov travels the country and speaks about how his film was taken from him and why he just can't create any more; Williams shows a bit more class and doesn't complain openly, but still blames the system for not allowing him to finish (after 20 odd years) his masterpiece *The Thief and The Cobbler.*

Give it a break, guys. Until you realize that show business is a *business,* you will never reach your potential. Other people with less talent are making much better films, and that's because they know how to deal with people, how to compromise (not a dirty word), and how to work within the limits they have. Most of us in the real world have limits placed on us - we have budgets too, you know - and somehow we survive without blaming everyone else. Heck, I'd love it if people

(Continued on Page 71)

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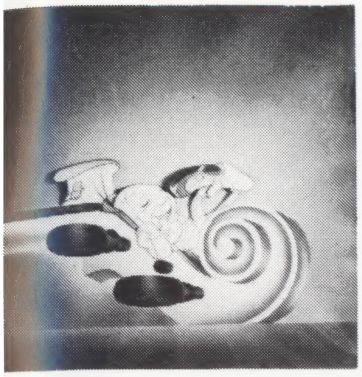

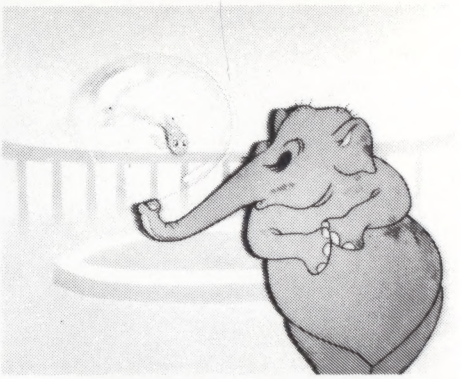

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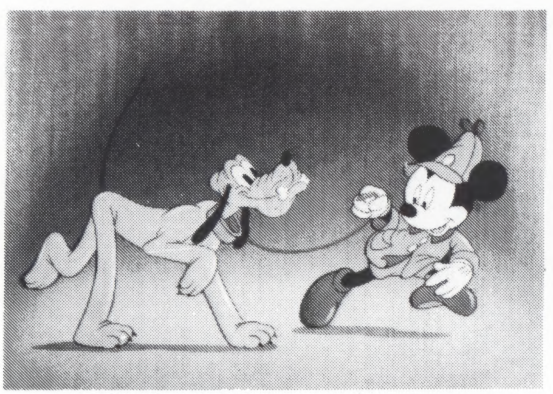

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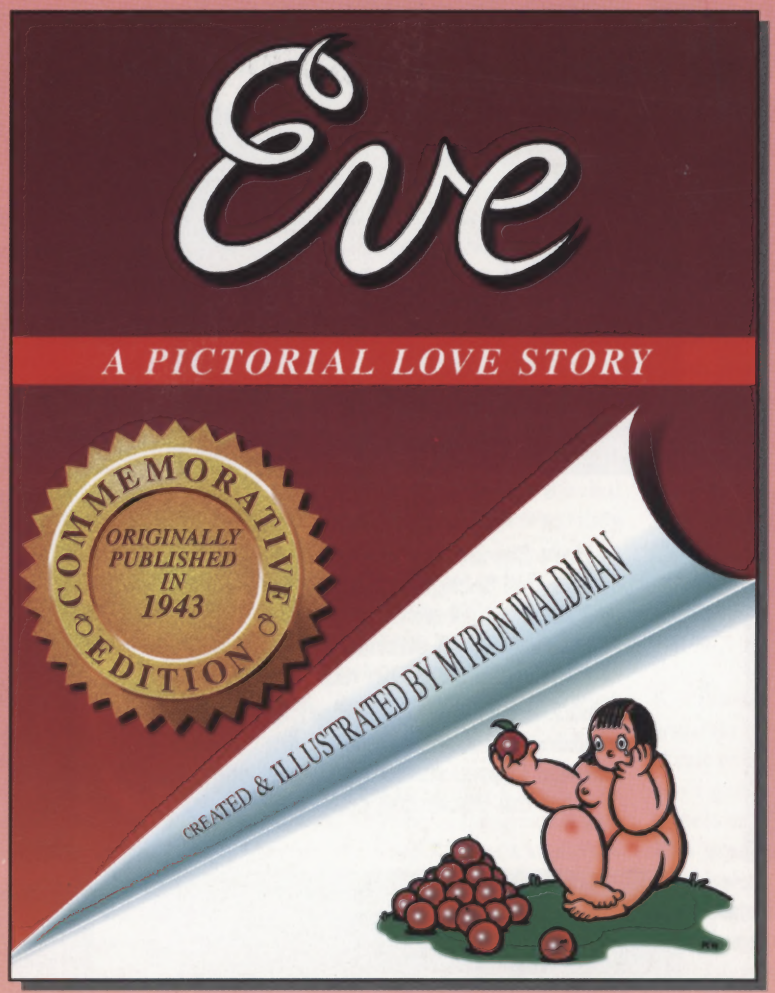

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